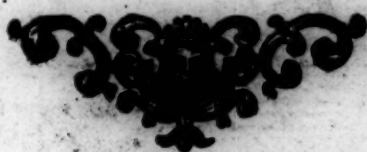


M O R A L
REFLECTIONS
O N
SELECT PASSAGES
O F T H E
N E W T E S T A M E N T:

Divided into PORTIONS for
Every Sunday throughout the Year.
F O R T H E
U S E o f F A M I L I E S.

Written by the AUTHOR of
THE GENTLEMAN INSTRUCTED.

VOLUME II.



L O N D O N:

Printed for W. BICKERTON, at *Lord Bacon's Head,*
without *Temple-Bar.* MDCCXXXVI.

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M O R A L
REFLECTIONS
O N
SELECT PASSAGES
O F T H E
N E W T E S T A M E N T.

I. EPISTLE of St. John, Chap. v. Verse

4. *For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

6. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

4 MORAL REFLECTIONS

7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

8. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.



THE Christian religion considers its professors as newly born to God either by the water of baptism, or the tears of repentance; and therefore exhorts them, by St. Peter, to suck in the milk of his holy word, and to imprint in their minds its great mysteries, to the end that, by preserving the grace, either received in baptism, or by repentance, they may advance in virtue. *As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2.*

And, because they will find in their way most potent enemies, that endeavour to put a stop to their progress, she arms them with faith, by which all the saints have gloriously triumph'd over the world, and happily purchased heaven.

And St. John, in the present epistle, assures us, that our faith is the most proper weapon to conquer the world, and all those enemies, that, with it, conspire our ruin: *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:* For faith is the first principle, the foundation of all good works, the universal instrument to acquire virtue, and to repel all temptations to vice. Without faith, we are slaves to nature, a prey to pleasure,
and

and wholly given up to the government of sense and passion ; we not only lie open to the treachery of the world, but even dote on its treason ; we put on its chains, not only without reluctance, but even with pleasure.

But when we are born of God by a lively faith, when we firmly believe those great truths Christ revealed to the apostles, and they to us ; then we are fenced against all the charming assaults of the world, and enabled not only to resist, but to overcome its sollicitations. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* It persuades us to subdue our flesh, to mortify our unruly appetites, and to postpone present happiness to the expectation of a future felicity : for who firmly believes there is another region beyond this, and that our souls will live, when our bodies lie in the grave, that their condition in the next world will answer the lives we lead in this, that the good shall enjoy an eternity of happiness, and the bad an endless misery ; whosoever, I say, believes such a punishment will follow sin, and such a reward virtue, has a sufficient motive to avoid the one, and to practise the other.

Let the world offer a true believer all its treasures of wealth, grandeur, and pleasure, set out in the most charming appearance ; he will look upon them with contempt and disdain, as false lights that only shine to lead him into a precipice, and then vanish ; he will esteem all those things that affect the senses, as corruptible, fleet, and fading, and, by consequence, not to bear any proportion with those eternal pleasures and glory, God has promis'd for those who condemn them, or with the torments that follow the criminal enjoyment of them. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

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It was this article of faith, that gave courage to the martyrs to confess Christ before tyrants, and strength to suffer for his name all the torments that malice could invent, or rage inflict: they were convinced, that the *sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed*; and this enabled them to bear up against the most cruel tortures, and *in patience to possess their souls*, Luke xxi. 19.

In a word, faith is the source and soul of all supernatural virtues: with faith they rise, without it they fall into nothing: patience vanishes, humility retires, hope staggers, and charity dies; so that without it we become examples of blindness, weakness, misery and sin.

But, if faith in Jesus Christ overcomes the world, as St. John affirms; *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* how comes it that so many, who profess Christianity, are slaves to the world? that they espouse its maxims, and obey all its commands? one would think, by their conduct, Christendom was no less infidel than America, and that faith was as great a stranger to Europe, as in our Saviour's time to Jewry. *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8.

It is true, however, many believe Christ is God; that he died for the sins of the world; nay, they credit all the articles of faith, all the rules of morality he has revealed; yet this alone is not that faith, which overcometh the world; it must be animated by charity, enlivened by those virtues, Christ recommended to our practice; without these accessories, our faith is dead, and those, that go no farther than speculation, are but half Christians; they are of the religion of those, that profess him
with

with their tongues, *and deny him by their actions*; they are mere impostors, as St. Ambrose says.

That faith may influence our actions, we must frequently meditate upon those truths Christ hath revealed; we must imprint them in our memories, and engrave them on our hearts; a lively apprehension of those joys, he has prepared for those that love him, will give us an aversion to those the world can either give or promise; and the contemplation of that fire he has kindled for those, that disobey his commands, will fright us into obedience; in fine, the prospect of the reward will invite us to the exercise of all virtues, and that of the punishment will deter us from vice.

Increase, O Lord, my faith: give me a faith not dead, which will only serve to render me more criminal, but a faith animated with perfect charity, which will not only conform my understanding to thy revelations, but excite efficaciously my will to an exact compliance with all thy commands.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. xx. Verse

19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

20. *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

22. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*

23. *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour, after his glorious resurrection, appeared to his disciples seldomer than they desired, but often enough to confirm them in the faith of his Divinity, to reveal those truths he commanded them to preach, and to model the government of his Church.

He conquered death by dying; the third day after, he triumph'd over it by rising, not only in a state of life but of glory, and the same day revived the drooping faith of his dear apostles by a double appearance; first, to Mary Magdalen, and, secondly, in the evening to all the apostles, except St. Thomas who was absent: *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst.*

He honoured Magdalen with the first visit, *because she loved much*, Luke vii. 47. Since her conversion, all criminal love was wholly turned into divine; her heart was more in her Saviour's breast than in her own; and she seemed divided from her self, when separated from him: this made her repair to the sepulchre *betimes*; and when
her

her companions retired, she remained at the grave, and resolved either to find him, or to pass the day in devotion and tears.

But all the apostles (except Peter and John) shut themselves up in a chamber, for fear of the Jews; that cowardly passion, that persuaded them to abandon their Master at his sufferings, forced them to abscond after the scene was over; so that they durst not approach the sepulchre; nay, when they were assured by *Mary Magdalen*, that she had seen our Lord, they received the news as a dream, and gave no credit to her report.

This shews the difference between two classes of Christians; those that love God, and those that love themselves. The former seek him in all their actions. Like *Magdalen*, they are above fear, above the awing dread of shame, and the bugbear of human respects. Penetrated with a true sense of their duty, they resolve to comply with it in spite of danger and opposition, and persuade themselves they gain, tho' they lose their lives in his service; to these he will certainly appear by his grace, accompanied with all those favours, that wait upon it, a calm conscience, an interior satisfaction, that can only be express'd by those who feel it: or, if he defers his visit, it is only to try their patience, and to crown their perseverance. *Magdalen*, by staying at our Saviour's sepulchre, found him, when she thought him lost, and pass'd in a moment from the despair of seeing him unto the satisfaction of enjoying his presence.

But those, who are more concern'd for themselves than the discharge of their duty to God; who act out of fear of his justice, rather than a motive of love, meet not with the same blessing; or, if they do, it is very late, and the mere effect of God's goodness: for fear is a kind of a slavish passion, and an unfit motive for a Christian, who
serves

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serves not a tyrant, but a Father, that deserves our whole heart for what he has done to expiate our sins, for what he has prepared to recompense our virtues, and a thousand hearts for his own perfections. I know indeed, it is not evil to fear God : we are assured by the Holy Ghost, that the beginning of wisdom is to fear him, Eccclus. i. 16. and in a hundred places of holy writ, we are commanded to dread his Majesty, and to observe his law, out of a fear of his justice : but however, this reaches not the perfection nor the obligation of Christianity, which requires love, as St. Paul assures us, *Love is the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. xiii. 10.

Our Saviour, appearing to his apostles, neither discourses of the pains he had suffered, nor the cruelty of the Jews, by whose rage and malice he suffered, nor of the infidelity of the apostles, who abandon'd him ; no, he only endeavours to cure their incredulity, and to convince them of his resurrection.

This conduct of our Lord teaches us neither to complain of our enemies, who persecute us, nor of our friends who abandon us ; we must leave our cause to God, who will defend our innocence, and in due time punish the cruelty of those, and the ingratitude of these. In the very extremity of his sufferings, our Saviour neither complained of the injustice of those who condemned him, nor of the cruelty of those who tormented him ; but, on the very cross, excused their barbarity, and sued for their pardon ; nor has he only taught us this lesson by his practice, but has also left it as a command in his gospel.

Pray for them, says he, *which persecute you*, Matth. v. 44. return good for evil, and bless those who curse you ; so that it is so far from being lawful for Christians to complain, or to speak
evil

evil of their persecutors, that, when it is not in their power to benefit them by their actions, they must at least by their prayers.

He saluted his disciples with a *Peace be unto you*, and immediately shewed them his hands and feet, that, by beholding those wounds, they might be convinced, the same body that suffered on the cross stood before them, and consequently that there was no room left to doubt of his resurrection, or to question his Divinity.

But our blessed Lord would leave the marks of his wounds in his glorious body, not only as an evidence of his resurrection, but also as an eternal monument of his charity to man, as continual motives of joy to the saints, and of torment to the damned.

Besides, he is our Mediator and Advocate at his Father's tribunal : there he implores mercy for the sinner, and a reward for the virtues of the just ; and can he plead more emphatically, than by shewing those wounds he received for their redemption, those channels, that let out the last drop of his precious blood, which his Father accepted, and he paid as a just, nay, a superabundant ransom ? What grace may not a sinner expect from so bountiful, so loving a Father, when ask'd by so loving a Son, who carried his obedience to the torture, and abased his Majesty to the ignominy of the cross ?

In fine, he left his sacred wounds, wide open, for a sanctuary to the afflicted, and a safe retreat to those, who are assailed by the devil. Who can repine at sufferings, when he beholds these marks of Christ's torments ? or murmur against the ingratitude of friends, or the violence of enemies, when he contemplates those bloody witnesses of both in his Redeemer's body ? The bare sight of these wounds, tho' glorious, manifests the heinousness

nousness of sin, which gave them; and consequently the folly of those, who, for a petty interest or a small satisfaction, fall into a crime that may indeed be cancel'd by a serious repentance, and will perchance be eternally punish'd with fire and brimstone. Oh, did we but cast an eye upon those wounds, and soberly consider that sin caused them, and that God received them, we should never yield to a criminal suggestion, nor pawn our innocence for a guilty pleasure.

When our Saviour had proved his Divinity by all the evidence sense is capable of, or reason could require, he breathed upon them, and said to them; *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

I will not here enter upon a controversial discussion of the text; for indeed it is too clear to need a comment: here is given to the apostles, and, in them, to their successors, a power of forgiving sins (when the penitent is rightly disposed) by absolution: *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* But, as he has impowered priests, on the one side, to absolve; so he lays the sinner under an obligation to repent of his sins, with a true and sincere sorrow; for, without repentance, there can be no absolution.

Would not a traitor think himself very kindly dealt with, if his prince promised not only to pardon the treason, but to receive him into favour, on condition he repented of his crime, with a sincere resolution to live a dutiful and obedient subject for the future? yet God only requires this of a sinner. The easy task of repentance and amendment, on our side, will secure us pardon, and even reward, on his.

I. EPISTLE of St. Peter, Chap. ii. Verse

21. *For even hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

22. *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth :*

23. *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously ;*

24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.*

25. *For ye were as sheep going astray ; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls,*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

IT is an article of our faith, that Christ died for our sins ; nor is it less sure that he lived for our instruction. He gave us a right to heaven by his death, and he shewed us the way to it by his life. *Christ suffered for us* (says St. Peter) *leaving us an example* : as if he should say ; Christ opened heaven-gate to us by his death ; but we must follow his example, if we intend to enter. And then the apostle enumerates those virtues our Saviour practised, to insinuate, that we must copy the original, to partake of his glory.

And first, *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example.* These words teach us a truth of the highest importance, viz. that it is the duty of a Christian to fly a soft, effeminate, life, and rather to crucify the flesh, than pamper it : he must not swim
with

with the stream of nature, but labour against it. *Let him deny himself.* He must seek those things that thwart inclination, not those that please it; *Let him take up his cross,* Matth. xvi. 24. A Christian is not only condemned to labour by the sentence of nature, but by the principles of his religion. For a Christian is a man, who openly professes to follow Christ; that is, to believe his doctrine, and to practise those virtues he commands in his gospel, and recommends to us by his example. It is on this condition he promises heaven; *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* Rev. iii. 21. I have merited this high state of glory for my humanity by my virtues; and all my followers must imitate my actions, to partake of my glory.

And St. Peter does not only in general assure us, Christ's life must be the pattern of ours; but he descends to particulars: *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffer'd, he threatned not.* This conduct of our blessed Saviour engages us to suffer with patience the calumnies of evil men, and all the temptations and persecutions of evil spirits, with sweetness and resignation. Our innocence can be no excuse for complaints, much less for revenge. Christ *had committed no sin*, as St. Peter testifies; and yet he would neither plead innocence before his heavenly Father for an exemption, nor use his power in his own defence; but received sentence of condemnation, and death, from the hands of his barbarous enemies.

But alas! We are often guilty of the same conduct we blame in our neighbour, and lay greater failures at his door, than he at ours. We cannot therefore, without the greatest partiality in this case, fall into fits of impatience: it is true, a neighbour
does

does ill, in returning affronts for affronts; but we do worse, by giving the first provocation.

But tho' we are innocent in regard of men, we are always culpable in the sight of God. *We all offend in many things*: why then should we take it ill to be treated severely by men, who perchance have never received any obligation from us, when we daily offend God, from whose goodness we received all we possess in this world, and from whose bounty we expect all happiness in the other? Tho' therefore men have no right to punish or persecute us, God has. And how do you know but he makes use of their malice, to chastise our faults here, that he may spare them hereafter, and besides crown a short patience with a reward of eternal glory?

It is certain, nothing can befall us but by God's permission: he neither designs, nor even permits any thing here, but for our good; and we may turn it to our profit, if we please, by receiving it with a christian resignation to providence. The most mortifying accidents may prove, not only advantageous, but even sweet, if we raise our thoughts above time, and fix them upon eternity. Who can reflect with St. Paul, that a moment of pain, born for the love of God, will be rewarded with an eternity of pleasure, and not receive, with patience, an outrage from a neighbour, or even the most cruel death from the hand of a tyrant? There is no more proportion between the pain and the recompence, than between time and eternity: that soon passes, but this never ends.

When therefore we are attack'd by malicious tongues, and our reputation is blackened by false aspersions; let us not think of the injury we suffer, but rather of our sins that deserve the mortification; not of our reputation which is lessened in the esteem of men, but of the crown of glory, God has prepared

pared for those, who suffer reproaches and calumnies, with humility, patience and resolution.

O! could we but deeply imprint this truth, which our religion not only obliges us to know, but also to practise; temporal misfortunes would make small impression upon us; we should bear them with less trouble, and more advantage, I am sure. But the weakness of our faith encreases the sensibility of nature, and this heats our passions to such a degree, that they suffer no cool thoughts to enter into our soul. We give ourselves up wholly to resentment; and so make use of those means, God permitted to befall us for our sanctification, to our prejudice.

St. Peter assures us, our Saviour cured the wounds sin had made in our souls, by the wounds and scars he received in his body. Our salvation cost him dear: is it not just, we should do something ourselves? *He bore our sins in his own body on the tree*; and can we do less, than to bear at least, with patience, those crosses he permits others to lay upon us? They expiate the punishment due to our sins, if well employ'd, and encrease both, if ill: Where then is our prudence? nay, where is our Christianity, if we let slip so favourable occasions to appease God's anger, and to merit his favour?

St. Peter tells the Christians of his times, they had all gone astray like sheep, but that, by abjuring their former idolatry, embracing the christian religion, and practising its doctrine, they were happily returned to the Pastor of their souls. We all go astray from our Pastor Jesus Christ, not only when we abandon his religion; but when we act contrary to his precepts; and when our lives bear no resemblance with our faith: and there is no way to return to his fold, but by a hearty and sincere repentance. We must change our heart, alter our practice, detest the fond allurements of flesh
and

and blood, and follow closely our heavenly Pastor, that is, observe inviolably his commands; and then his providence will carefully watch over us, and lead us into those joys he has promised to those, that serve him with fidelity and perseverance.

Desire not therefore, O my soul, a life without crosses; but rather strength to bear them with resignation: and, if thou wilt not embrace them with joy, at least support them with patience. This is not only thy duty, but thy advantage: by the pain of a moment, thou wilt deserve the reward of a happy eternity.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. x. Verse

11. *I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

12. *But he that is an hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*

13. *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

14. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

15. *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour, in almost every place of the scripture, uses the most endearing expressions imaginable, to court men to love him. One would think he stood in need of our affection to compleat his happiness; and that his interest moved him to invite us to his service, not our own: he often leaves the awful title of Lord, to call us brethren; that this near relation may move us to a kindness, and a confidence suitable to so strict an alliance. Sometimes he compares himself to a mother, and protests his love for us exceeds that of the most passionate mother for her dearest child. In the passage before us, he compares himself to a shepherd, *I am the good shepherd*: and shews that he is as watchful to procure our salvation, as the most vigilant shepherd is to preserve his flock.

And, to convince us of this truth, he lays before us all the properties of a good pastor, on the one side; and those of a bad one, on the other. *The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*: this he did upon the cross; not only in the most painful, but also the most shameful and ignominious manner imaginable. This death he embraced, not for his own sins (for he was without spot) but ours; to satisfy his Father for our rebellion; and to purchase grace, to enable us to live virtuously here, and in bliss hereafter. All the labours of thy life, O Lord, were undergone for our example; all the pains, and torments of thy death, for our ransom: the suffering was thine; but the advantage ours. Thou art not more happy because thou hast made us so; nor wouldst thou have been miserable, had we been eternally punished. O that our gratitude would bear some proportion with thy favours;
and

and the care of our souls with the price they cost thee!

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep. Tho' our Saviour be the only universal Shepherd; yet every Christian is pastor at least of one sheep (I mean his own soul) that is committed to his care. And certainly every man's interest obliges him to be watchful: it is his only stock; his whole treasure. If he loses this, he is undone, past any hope of recovery. If he preserves it, he is rich, tho' in the extremity of poverty, and happy too under the most severe calamities. Yet, Oh! How often do we play the part of a hireling? how seldom of a good pastor? One would think this sheep belonged not to us; that we had no interest in its safety, we are so little concerned at its loss. When we see the wolf (*i. e.* temptation) coming, we fly and abandon it to the mercy of our enemies, who have none: and what is the conclusion, but what our Saviour delivers, *and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep?*

But our blessed Saviour seems in some manner to excuse the flight of a hireling, who flies because the sheep belong not to him. But, alas! we have not this pretext for our cowardise and neglect. This sheep is our own; nay, it is a part, and the prime part of us. And what can be more our own, than ourselves? Why then do we abandon it to the rage of the devil, who has all the voraciousness of the wolf, and all the force of the lion. He makes his rounds, night and day (*like a roaring lion*) to assail it unguarded. And, instead of defending it, at the approach of this cruel enemy, we pretend by flight to secure ourselves, as if we could be safe, when our souls are in danger.

Had we at least two sheep, that is, two souls; we might venture one, and secure the other. But,

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alas! we have only one ; and, if this be lost, there is no recovering it. The whole world, nay, a thousand worlds are incapable to redeem it : *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul*, Matth. xvi. 26. We must sit down with the loss, and eternally deplore it, without hope of ever retrieving it.

But we are not only guilty of neglect, but, what is worse, of temerity also : we not only fly, when the wolf comes. (*i. e.*) when temptations present themselves ; but we even seek them ; we run headlong without consideration into those companies, where the devil lays traps to ensnare us ; where idle discourse distracts us ; sinful gestures disarm, occasion sollicit, and emboldens us to evil. In these circumstances, in the midst of these dangers, instead of standing upon our guard, how often do we sleep, and without resistance, nay, with pleasure, deliver up our soul to its mortal enemies ; who please our senses merely to stupify our reason, to slacken our care, and assure our ruin ?

Warn a sinner of his excesses, desire him to repent ; he will tell you, the world is so full of dangers, it is hard to avoid them ; that temptations are so strong, and nature so weak, it is almost impossible to overcome them. But, if there are so many dangers, should not our care and caution rise in proportion ? If nature is so weak, should we expose it so easily ? and, if temptations are so strong, is it not the part of prudence to avoid, and an extreme temerity to seek them, and the last of follies to court them ?

We should set a careful watch upon all our senses, to keep off (if possible) the approach of temptation ; and therefore should never suffer our eyes to wander among those objects, that, through these avenues, break in upon our hearts, and subdue our wills. We should beg of God, with bended knees,

knees, and lifted up hands, the prudence to avoid our enemies, and the strength to conquer them, if they assail us: and, if we did so, we should perform the office, not of a hireling, but of a good shepherd; we should not submit to temptations, but resist them, and disengage our souls (if not from danger) at least from ruin. O good shepherd! who hast so much care of souls, give us the prudence to have some solicitude for our own! Inspire us with courage to resist our enemies, and make us so happy as to overcome them!

We cannot complain of our weakness. Our Saviour tells us in this very place, he *knows his sheep*. This is not to be understood of a mere speculative knowledge: alas! he knows all things. He knows the damned, to punish them; but he knows the virtuous, to love them; and the weak, to strengthen them: like a good father, he provides for their necessities; he is solicitous for their safety; offers them means to procure it; and assures them of success, if they make use of his assistance.

If therefore we submit to the suggestions of the devil, we must accuse our negligence, not our weakness. St. Paul assures us, God permits nobody to be tempted above his strength. It is inconsistent with his goodness to lay upon us obligations we cannot comply with, to load us with burdens we cannot bear. He proportions his grace to the difficulty, and gives us power to resist, when he permits us to be tempted. Let us therefore never run into temptation on the one side, nor fear it on the other, if it pursues us. That is temerity and presumption, mortal enemies to innocence; *he that loveth danger shall perish in it*, Ecclus. iii. 27. This is a mark of diffidence, either of our Saviour's power, or his goodness. Of his power, if we suspect he cannot; of his goodness,

if we distrust he will not protect us : and both are criminal. He can protect us, because he is omnipotent : he will, because he is good ; because he has promised his assistance, and cannot break his word. Distrust then yourself ; confide in God : neither fear, nor presume.

Now if you desire to know whether you belong to our Saviour's flock ; the following words inform you : *And am known of mine.* That is, they consider what Jesus Christ has done ; what he has suffered for them : how he lost his life for their sakes, and exposed his sacred person to all the rage of men, to preserve them from the tyranny of the devil. These thoughts inflame them with a fervent love of their benefactor : they adore him as their God, and love him as their Redeemer. *They bear his voice, and follow him.* They are sedulous in hearing what he teaches, and as exact in the practice. They detest all the loose maxims of the world, to embrace his. This is truly to know him in the sense of the gospel, and an infallible mark, that we are of his flock.

O sovereign Pastor of our souls ! by thy sacred passion, I conjure thee to place me in thy beloved flock. Give me the grace to hear thy voice, and the will to obey thy commands, without ever being so unfortunate as to transgress them : and lead me to heaven, where there will be, eternally, but one flock, and one Shepherd.

I. EPISTLE of St. Peter, Chap. ii. Verse

11. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles : that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

13. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ;*

14. *Or unto governours, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

15. *For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

16. *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

17. *Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostle persuades the Christians to behave themselves like strangers and pilgrims in this world, to withdraw their affections from all carnal objects, that war upon the soul, and prejudice it more than they can oblige the senses, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

We are all strangers and pilgrims : We have no constant habitation, as St. Paul assures us: *Here have we no continuing city*, Heb. xiii. 14. This world is but a wilderness, that leads us unto the heavenly

heavenly Canaan : and therefore it is a folly to amuse ourselves with those vain objects that occur ; which only serve to retard our journey, and oftentimes to put us out of the way. *The figure of this world passeth away*, as well as we : all things here below are tied to the wheel of time, which never stands, but is in a perpetual motion, and hurries all sublunary things, and its self also, to their several ends. One man succeeds another : the former generation makes room for the subsequent, and one age begins where another ends. So that we live in a region ignorant of stability, and from the beginning accustomed to vicissitudes. Upon this ground, the two great apostles dissuade Christians from setting their hearts upon any thing here below : for oftentimes they will not obtain what they desire, and never experience the satisfaction they expect : for how can a heart, made for God, be really satisfied with any thing upon earth ? A heart, able to contain an ocean of bliss in heaven, can never be filled with a drop of pleasure ; nor a spirit with those delights, that only affect the senses. And besides, God knows ! all those follies, we are pleased to call pleasure, are as short as empty. If they take not their flight before we die, they must leave us on our death-bed. And what profit shall we reap from the past, but a certain conviction, that we have been wretchedly deceived ?

It is therefore wholesome advice of St. Peter, to behave ourselves *as strangers and pilgrims* ; to look upon all things here, as pilgrims do upon those objects that present themselves on the way, merely in passing, without concern or affection : if God is pleased to favour you with temporal conveniences, thank him for the blessing, and use it to his honour, not to his prejudice, and your own ruin. Give your heart to him, and never enslave it to
any

any creature: it is too small to be divided; and unless you give it him entire, you give him nothing: you cannot settle it upon creatures, and raise it up to heaven: for St. Paul tells us, a sensual man tastes not those things that are spiritual, and therefore exhorts all, to live in the world, as if they were out of it; to possess temporal things without affection; to use them with moderation, and leave them with indifference; to fear nothing but sin, and love nothing but God; for nothing can withdraw us from God, but sin; and nothing can put us in possession of him, but love. Therefore no temporal concerns must so take up our thoughts or time, as to leave no room for those of our souls. And if they endanger our salvation, or, in St. Peter's phrase, *war against the soul*, we must absolutely forsake them.

Some objects *war against the soul* openly: such are all those that tempt to sin, and allure us under pretence of pleasure or profit: such as cannot be desired, without a crime; nor enjoyed, without rebellion against God and heaven, and against our own souls. These we must absolutely forgo: they not only *war against the soul*, but stab it: they rob it of sanctifying grace, cut off its title to heaven, and expose it to the just anger of an offended Deity. Others are less dangerous indeed, but still they war against the soul, by withdrawing it from the practice of those virtues Christianity prescribes; which perfect the soul, and prepare it for a glorious reward hereafter. These we may enjoy, but with moderation, according to the rules of right reason, not of passion and sensuality; which, by observing no mean, neither in their flight or pursuit, turn the most innocent satisfactions into unlawful enjoyments.

St. Peter not only exhorts Christians to refrain from all carnal desires, but also to practise all manner

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manner of virtues : and this not merely for their own advantage, but to wipe off an unjust imputation, laid to their charge by the Gentiles, that their doctrine was scandalous, and their religion impure. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* The Nicolaites (sprung from one of the first deacons) gave ground for these aspersions. Their tenets were impure ; their lives as bad as their doctrine. That had nothing of the Christian but the name. However, their crimes reflected on the orthodox Church, which, bearing the same name, was supposed, by the Gentiles, guilty of the same enormities. To these St. Peter writes, and conjures them to confute the calumny by the sanctity of their lives : *For so is the will of God ; that with well-doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

The articles of our belief are true, and its morals the most sublime. Nothing can be more conformable to reason, nothing more conducing to the highest perfection. They teach us our duty to God ; they regulate our conduct to our neighbour : nor do they only direct our exterior actions, but bridle our very thoughts. So that did our lives correspond to our laws, this world would be turned into a paradise : we should enjoy a taste of heaven on earth, and be both happy here and hereafter. At our baptism we vowed to square our lives by the maxims of the gospel : by this we became Christians, that is, followers of Christ, and members of his Church. However, notwithstanding all these vows and promises, all these obligations of interest, duty and gratitude, too many give occasion, by their loose lives, to the enemies of Christianity, to blaspheme our religion. It is true, did we judge of the truth of religion by the practice of the greatest part of
its

its professors, we should be at a stand, and perchance condemn all; malice being so apt to draw inferences from practice; and to conclude, That religion teaches corrupt morals, whose professors practise them. We ought, therefore, to stand upon our guard; to walk with caution and circumspection; and shew by our manners the purity of our faith. Our Saviour pronounces a severe *Wo* upon those, who scandalize their neighbour; *Wo to that man by whom the offence cometh!* and then certainly more than a single *Wo* will fall upon those, who cast a scandal upon our Saviour himself.

And can we throw a more affronting one on his sanctity, than by persuading his enemies, by our conduct, that he teaches what we practise, and that his doctrine is no less reprehensible than our manners? This is, once more, as much as in us lies, to expose his sacred body to the cross, his person to blasphemy, and his honour to all the defaming obloquy of his enemies.

Indeed, would the enemies of Christianity take the pains to examine its principles, they might blame our sensuality, but not our religion, much less the author of it. And they might perchance justly upbraid us, as St. Stephen did the Jews, *Ye have received a law, not by the disposition of angels, but immediately from God, and yet have not kept it,* Acts vii. 57. But still a regular life is the shortest way to silence our adversaries, and to defeat their ignorance or malice: and this St. Peter insists upon, as the most proper to rescue our profession from slander and prejudice: *For so is the will of God, that with well-doing, ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

And therefore he conjures the Christians to confute the charge of treason laid upon them by the Gentiles with so much clamour. *Submit yourselves*

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to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme : or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him : for so is the will of God. You must obey your prince, not out of a principle of interest, but of duty ; not out of the fear of punishment ; but a sense of religion : For so is the will of God. You must neither condemn his orders, nor revile his person.

Because Christ has redeemed us with his precious blood, some pretended, in the apostles days, as well as ours, he had discharged us of all subjection: that all Christians stood upon the same level, and consequently, that no body had authority to command, no body an obligation to obey. St. Peter assures us indeed, we are free ; but then he tells us also, that those, who stretch their freedom so far, abuse the favour, and use their privilege to cover their malice. *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness,* 1 Pet. ii. 16. Christian liberty exempts us from the slavery of sin, from the bondage of our passions ; but not from subjection to those, whom God has placed over us. We must obey their commands, and observe their laws, when just, and hear their voice, as God's, whose vicegerents they are on earth, out of a principle of conscience, not out of fear of punishment ; *as the servants of God,*

In fine, *honour all men ; love the brotherhood ; fear God ; honour the king ;* is the apostle's command. Regulate your conduct by a piety, publick, universal, and exemplary ; especially before people of another persuasion ; who pry into your actions, to criticise and traduce them. Give no occasion to malice to decry your religion ; but edify all by an irreproachable behaviour : that *by your good works, which they shall behold, they may glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Oh, my Redeemer ! I beg a thousand pardons for all the scandals I have cast upon the religion
thou

thou hast been pleased to plant by thy labour, to water with thy sweat, and to cultivate with thy blood : and, by the help of thy grace, I purpose to repair the damage my ill example may have done my neighbour, by a regular behaviour, conformable to thy maxims, and in obedience to thy laws.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. xvi. Verse

16. *A little while and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

17. *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while and ye shall see me : and, Because I go to the Father ?*

18. *They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while ? we cannot tell what he saith.*

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among your selves of that I said, A little while and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while and ye shall see me ?*

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoyce : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

21. *A woman, when she is in travail, bath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembreth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*

22. *And ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again ; and your heart shall rejoyce, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

The

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS passage of scripture is pathetic, taken out of that tender sermon, our Saviour made to his apostles, just before his passion. *A little while, and ye shall not see me.* My life draws to an end: I must lose it for your good, and my Father's glory; but I will only leave you for a time. *And again, a little while, and ye shall see me;* not in a state of weakness and passibility, but of immortality and glory. But the poor apostles understood not what this *little while* meant: *What is this that he saith unto us?*

St. Augustin answers the question. *Our whole lives, yea the world itself, is this little while, of which our Saviour speaks.* And St. James compares our lives to an exhalation, that appears and vanishes in a moment. *What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,* Ja. iv. 14. For take the longest life, it is but a little while, and some come not up even to that. They end almost where they began; and few moments pass between their coming into the world, and their going out of it. It is true, we divide our lives into infancy, childhood, youth, manhood and old-age. Yet these divisions add not a moment to their length: compared with the world's duration, they are only *a little time*; to eternity, nothing.

Yet this truth, tho' manifest, tho' as evident as reason, experience, and revelation can make it, is disbelieved by the greatest part of mankind. For, did they believe it in good earnest, would they not husband it better? would they prostitute to trifles, those few, but precious, moments, on which depends an eternity? Advise people to comply better with the duty of a Christian; tell them
that

that this life is short and uncertain ; do they not all put you off with a *we will provide for the future hereafter* ? There is time enough behind to make provision for the next world. They have their hands full at present of other business more pressing. Oh foolish man, to be thus imposed upon ! to be tricked so wretchedly out of heaven, and into hell : who will in spite of reason and faith, spend some days in mirth and pleasure, with those reprobates in Job, without reflecting on their sad disaster ; and in a moment they descend into hell, and end their mirth, to begin an everlasting despair. *Who spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave*, Job xxi. 13.

The man in the gospel, whom our Saviour mentions as a warning to us, was of opinion that life was long : he enterprised great things ; he had his head full of imaginary greatness ; his coffers of wealth : he enlarged his granaries, and laid up provisions for many years : he thought he had time enough to enjoy the present fruit of his labour, and to make preparation for heaven. But, alas ! his expectation deceived him : he, who promised himself an age, found not a day ; *This very night thy soul shall be required of thee*, Luke xii. 20. Your wealth must pass into other hands, and your soul into another region. How many, in torments, who once were in the same opinion we are, *that our lives are long*, confess their error ? Their time, alas ! is up ; their lives seem to have been so very short, as if immediately they had been hurried from the cradle to the grave.

But, tho' our lives reach'd to ages ; yet does not reason tell us, we should first secure that which is of greatest importance, before we take into consideration the purchase of those things that cannot make us happy, tho' we possess them ; nor miserable, tho' we enjoy them not ? And is there
any

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any thing of greater importance than our salvation? An atom seems nothing, if compared with the immense bulk of the earth; what comparison therefore can we make between the possession of all the world can promise, and that of God? For all here below is temporal, momentary and frail. We may truly say of it, what our Saviour said of himself; *A little while, and ye shall see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall not see me.* It pleases for a time, and then leaves us in grief and disappointment; but the possession of God, the joys of heaven, are not only immense, but eternal also; and consequently, there is no proportion between all the temporal enjoyments, and the least degree of glory in heaven. And how void of reason is the conduct of those, who give up all their thoughts to the concerns of the present, and expose their salvation to the hazard of the future? We say, *We have time enough.* If we have so much time, at least let us first make sure of our salvation. It is the chief, and, if we believe our Saviour, our only concern. This alone can make us happy, and nothing but the loss of it can render us miserable.

When we have placed this in some degree of security, it will be time enough to take care of our temporal concerns. And, tho' death prevent us, our disappointment cannot be great; because we have secured the principal, our salvation; which follows us into the next world, and will last eternally. But, if we give the first place to the purchase of worldly trifles, and death arrests us before we are prepared for heaven, we shall confess, with the apostles upon another occasion, *We have toiled all the night, and we have taken nothing,* Luke v. 5. We have laboured our whole lives, like slaves chained to the oar; yet have gained nothing, but trouble and vexation of spirit. We shall
leave

leave behind us all we have gained ; and nothing will remain but the just punishment of our folly.

Follow the counsel of St. Chrysostome, who argues with the Christians of his time, that were for securing the satisfaction of this life, and leaving their salvation to the hazard of the future. “ You say, God has given time to many to confess in their old age. What do you infer ? that he will do you the same favour ? Perchance, you’ll say, he will. But why do you say perchance ? He has done it to many. Ah, reflect, I conjure you ; your soul lies at stake : say to your self, he has refused this kindness to many, and what if he refuse it to me ? ” Why then, O Christian, thou art undone for ever.

Your time being therefore short, and withal uncertain, employ first all your care to the purchase of heaven. Place your soul in as great security as this dangerous region will permit you ; and remember the greatest care and vigilance cannot seat you above temptation, and by consequence not above surprise ; what then will become of you, if, wholly taken up with temporal concerns, you forget or neglect those that are eternal ? If death seize upon you unforeseen, and surprise you unprovided, will your past pleasures, or present fortune, buy a moment, or procure repentance ? Alas, no ! Seek therefore in the first place *the kingdom of God*, Matth. vi. 33. And when you are well provided for this great purchase, if any time remains, employ it in temporal concerns, according to the rules of prudence, and the laws of Christianity. No man’s temporal concerns ever went the worse, because he took care of those that are eternal ; nay, they generally go on with more success. And God has engaged his word, they shall want nothing upon earth, who provide first for heaven. *Seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness ;*

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ousness; and all other things shall be added unto you.

But alas! our Saviour's prophecy to the apostles frights us: *Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoyce.* If we take up with the world, we shall swim in pleasure; if with Christ, in tears. It is true; but then we must reflect on the end of both. *But your sorrow shall be turned into joy;* and that of sinners into an eternal despair. Oh the difference between the end of the servants of God, and of the world! The enjoyments of these end in torments; the grief of those in glory.

Nay, and this without change, without intermission, and what is more, without end: *And your joy no man shall take from you.* The world can only reward our labours with things subject to envy and violence; time consumes them; and death puts an end to all earthly content. But oh! in heaven our recompence is out of the reach of violence, circumvention, and corruption: we shall enjoy it without fear, and taste it without anxiety; and for this reason, our blessed Saviour commanded his disciples to rejoyce in the midst of persecutions; *Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven,* Matth. v. 12. It will be infinite, because it is the possession of an infinite Being. It will be eternal, because *in heaven;* where there is no alteration, no violence; *and your joy no man shall take from you.*

This reward is not far off: nothing but a few moments separate us from its possession, *Again, a little while, and ye shall see me.* Forget therefore the past, and take courage from the shortness of the future: have patience a little; the goal is nigh; the combat draws to an end, and the crown is ready to fall upon your head.

I confess, dear Saviour, thou dost command us, not only to receive affliction without murmur, but even with joy. But alas! when thy hand lies heavy upon us, we feel no symptoms of pleasure; nay, we flatter our selves we do much, if we keep in murmurs, and stifle complaints. Yet we have the same prospects of glory thy apostles had: the same reward is proposed for us. Why then is our behaviour so different?

Ah Lord and Saviour! animate my faith, strengthen my hope; that, with thy great apostle, I may be seriously convinced, that all we can do, or suffer in this world, bears *no proportion with the reward thou hast prepared for those that love thee.*

EPISTLE of James, Chap. i. Verse

16. *Do not err, my beloved brethren.*

17. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.*

19. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*

20. *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

ALL gifts, all advantages, whether natural or supernatural, come from God, and are the effects of his bounty, for which we owe him an eternal gratitude. But St. James teaches us here,

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that some benefits are so perfect and so excellent, that we cannot receive them immediately from any but God alone: and among these, grace challenges the first place. The most perfect creature, without it, is nothing in the sight of God: *If I have not charity, I am nothing*, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. and the most vile, with it, is amiable. God saw all he made was good, and is, if I may say, fond of the vilest part of the creation. He loves the very insects in proportion to their perfection: but a sinner, without grace, tho' enriched with all the advantages of nature and fortune, is the object of his hatred. In a word, this sanctifying grace is the greatest favour God can bestow on us in this world, and a necessary requisite to enjoy him in the other.

This being so, we are obliged in prudence to part with all things, tho' never so charming, never so dear, rather than put this even to the venture. Expose your selves to all the torments cruelty can invent, or nature suffer, for the defence of this inestimable treasure; and rather fall into your grave, than into sin: for tho' you die, what do you lose, but a life that in some few years, and perchance days, must surrender to age or diseases? and, if you carry grace with you into the other world, you only exchange a mortal life for an eternal one, as happy, as it is sure to be everlasting. It gives you a title to all the promises of Jesus Christ, and to the glory he has prepared in heaven for those that love him. Is it then not worth the while, not only to fight to the last gasp, but even to condemn death for so noble a reward?

I know we pretend, it is an ungrateful enterprize to war upon our selves; and a hard combat to overcome the sallies of our passions: but why is it so hard to resist nature, when heaven will be the recompense of our labour; and so easy, when we
only

Only expect a momentary advantage, sometimes unworthy of a man, and always below the dignity of a Christian? We force nature into a thousand dangers for interest or glory. To rise in courts, we practise all that is hard, in patience, humility, and self-denial: to make a fortune in the army, we expose our bodies to the extremities of heat and cold, thirst and hunger; and our lives to a hundred deaths almost every moment. Will we not therefore do for God, what we suffer with pleasure for the world? to maintain our title to heaven, what we undergo to deserve an inconsiderable station upon earth?

Oh good God! how foolish are our judgments? how ill placed our sensibility? Decay in our health overwhelms us with grief; and the loss of an estate drives us to despair: but we forfeit the grace of Almighty God, not only without reluctance, but, what is more strange, without concern: yet all the losses in this world bear no proportion with that of grace: this we believe, this we confess: notwithstanding, oh superlative folly! we will not take the least pains to preserve this, nor shew the least concern, when we lose it.

Let the slaves of the world labour to encrease their fortunes, or to preserve them: I am resolved to employ all my care for the preservation of grace. This gives me an undoubted right to heaven, and adopts me child of the most High. Can my wishes fly higher? I know, I have before me dangerous enemies; but you, O Lord, will fly to my assistance: and, if I second your grace, how can I be overcome?

If the value of this gift deserves our care, the kindness of the Giver deserves our gratitude. *Of his own will* (says St. James) *begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures,* Jam. i. 18. He saw nothing

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nothing in us that merited his love ; nay, he saw sin, that deserved his aversion. Yet out of pure kindness, he called us to his Church, and adopted us for his children by baptism : he laid before us our duty in the gospel ; enables us by his grace to comply with it ; and that nothing may be wanting to compleat the favour, he opens a prospect of the joys of heaven to allure us, and of the torments of the damned, to fright us into a compliance with his just commands. He has bestowed on us this favour preferably to thousands, who are born in sin ; who live in error, and die in both : yet perchance, had they received the gift of faith, the pious education, and half the graces God has so plentifully furnished us with, they would have lived saints upon earth, and reigned such for ever in heaven.

Thy judgments, O Lord, are an abyss of kindness to me, and of justice to others : and my conduct is an abyss of ingratitude to thee, and of cruelty to my self. I have employed all thy favours to thy dishonour and my ruin, and have turned those arms, thou didst put in my hands for my safety, to my destruction : I can only, with the prodigal son, cast my self at thy feet, confess my disobedience, and with tears in my eyes, and sorrow in my heart, beg pardon, and humbly sue for forgiveness.

That we may more easily preserve this sanctifying grace, and usefully apply the other supernatural gifts ; St. James exhorts us, *to be swift to hear, and slow to speak* ; that is, to have an eagerness to hear the word of God, not out of curiosity, or a spirit of censure, but out of a sincere desire to learn the articles of our faith, and the principles of morality ; that we may square our belief to those, and our practice to these. These truths, deeply imprinted in our souls, will influence

ence our conduct, and give us a true notion of the baseness and insignificance of temporal enjoyments, and of the real value of those that are eternal : and when once we are convinced of the vanity of those, and of the solidity of these ; of the reward that follows virtue, and the punishment that treads on the heels of vice ; we shall take more care of our souls, than of our bodies, and pursue more eagerly those pleasures we expect, than those we at present are so fond of.

But then we must be *slow to speak* ; that is, we must retire from the hurry of the world ; from conversations either dangerous or useless ; and give some time to consideration, thought and meditation. For without this, the word of God makes no impression ; it sinks not into our souls : but, to use our Saviour's expression, *The fowls of the air gather up the seed* : so that it brings forth no fruit. For this reason, the prophet Isaiah (seeing his exhortations to repentance had no effect upon the Jews) conjured them to enter into their closets, to withdraw from the conversation of men, to consider the innumerable benefits God had bestowed on them, and the sad returns of ingratitude they had made their Benefactor. *Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee*, Isaiah, xxvi. 20.

Oh that we could persuade our selves to retire some moments every day from noise and tumult, and to spend some serious thoughts upon those truths God has revealed, and commands us to believe and practise ! that our souls are immortal ; and must either groan eternally under torments beyond expression, or enjoy pleasures above comprehension : that he has mark'd out, in his law, what we must do to avoid those ; what, to deserve these : that one of these extremes must be our lot ; and both cannot. Were we truly persuaded, I say, of these

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truths, and did we carry them in our memory, we should scarce ever be tempted to forsake our duty upon the bare views of interest or pleasure.

Give me, O Lord, the grace to know thy will, and thy assistance to fulfil it. Let me place all my delight, with the royal prophet, in meditating upon thy law, and all my care in complying with it. On this depends my whole happiness; and therefore it shall be my only employment, in time to prepare my self for a happy eternity.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. xvi. Verse

5. *But now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?*

6. *But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

7. *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

8. *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

9. *Of sin, because they believe not on me;*

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

13. *Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come.*

14. *He*

14. *He shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour checked the apostles, because they took not the pains to ask him where he was going. *None of you asketh me, whither goest thou ?* I have often repeated, that I must leave you, and this world ; and yet you enquire not where I intend to go : altho' it highly concerns you to know ; because you are obliged to follow me, and to walk on in the same way I have marked out, if you intend to live eternally with me. It is strange, the apostles should forget so obvious a question ; but yet it is more astonishing, that we should be so forgetful, or so indolent as not often to put the same question to ourselves. *Whither goest thou ?* And so, for want of reflection, we find ourselves on a precipice, before we dream of a danger. We post on without consideration, and fall into a misfortune without retrieve.

Let me therefore put you in mind whither you are going, dear Christians ; and at the same time desire you to carry the thought continually in your memory. You post to the grave, and once must leave all those amusements, that at present take up your thoughts, and captivate your hearts. Neither wealth nor poverty, neither nobility nor peasantry, vice nor virtue, can exempt you from the penalty of this law, almost as ancient as mankind. We are made of earth, and must return to our first original matter. Yet, tho' our bodies die, our souls remain ; and will be, eternally, either happy above, or miserable below, without change, without alteration. *If the tree fall towards the South, or towards the North, as the wise man, in the place*

place where the tree lieth; there it shall be, Eccl. xi.

3. Our misery and happiness depending upon the state death shall find us in, all our care and solicitude must tend to prepare us for this last moment, on which so much, nay our All, depends. It is therefore our interest, as well as duty, to carry always about us the thoughts of this fatal hour; for nothing will fit us more efficaciously for a happy removal, than a continual reflection we must remove. The great St. Paul assures us, in all his apostolical labours, he carried death in his thoughts, as well as in his body: *I die daily*: and this meditation disengaged him from all earthly objects, and encouraged him to lay up treasure in heaven. If we imitate St. Paul, we shall find the same effects, and probably take the same resolution.

For what is the reason we are so taken up with the cares of this world, even to the forfeiture of conscience, and honour; but that we seldom reflect, we must leave it? And why are so many surprized unprovided, but because they dread to dash their criminal pleasures with the remembrance of their mortality?

But in spite of negligence, dear Christian, you must fall into dust: beauty must set in corruption; strength must end in weakness; wealth and grandeur, in poverty and insignificancy. You will carry nothing into the next world, but your vices, or your virtues: Those for punishment; these for reward. This is a fundamental point of our religion. We all believe it; yet the greatest part, even of Christians, live, as if it were a fable invented to fright some, and to please others. And why? Because no body thinks of this terrible moment: no body considers in cold blood, the consequence of a happy death; no body the dismal consequences

consequences of a bad one : no body asks this question, *Whither goest thou ?*

Know then, when once you take leave of time, you fall into an eternity, either of joy or misery : that, when once you are entered, there is no return, no more time for you. If you expire in grace, you are happy for ever ; if in sin, for ever lost. This moment therefore decides, whether we shall live eternally with the saints, or eternally die with the reprobate. Is it not then of the highest concern to make some preparations for a moment of such importance ? For a moment that steals upon us unforeseen ; and often is not distant from us an hour, when we fancy it is removed many years.

Did we persuade ourselves, the raising of a great fortune depended on the managing of such a moment well, and our life upon the managing of it ill ; should we not night and day carry this critical point about us, and exert all our care to turn it to advantage ? Who would be so foolish as to engage himself in trifles of no concern, or industriously to endeavour to forget this moment, on which so great a good, and so great an evil, depends ? Yet what is the gain of a fortune compared to heaven ? The loss of life compared to hell ? Yet which of these must be our lot, is the decision of one moment. This pronounces the fatal sentence, which God will never reverse : it is without appeal ; immutable, eternal. Yet we fear to remember it, and use artifice to forget it. And this is the reason so many are surprized on the sudden, and, what is worse, unprepared.

Would our forgetfulness of death make death forget us, we might excuse our negligence : but alas ! she has us always in her eye, and seems to take pleasure to steal upon us unforeseen : and upon

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upon reflection, we shall find more sinners snatch'd away at unawares, than faints.

Now did we but take the pains to put this question often to ourselves : *Whither goest thou ?* And take some time to answer it, I am persuaded our lives would be better, and consequently our death more Christian. O man, *whither goest thou ?* As I came from dust, so I must return into dust. This is the fate of the prince, as well as of the subject ; and the faint is no more exempt from the penalty, than the sinner. Yet I know no more when I shall leave the world, than I knew when I entered into it. I may indeed live some years ; yet perchance I may die within some moments. I may be forewarned of my departure by a disease, and may find myself in the other world before I dream of leaving this. Nothing is certain, but that I must die, and leave all behind me, I either loved or feared. Whatever is built upon time, ends with life : this is the full extent of all temporal enjoyments, or sufferings. They vanish with our last breath, and lie buried in our graves with our bodies. When we lye on our death-bed gasping for breath, and see ourselves upon the brink of eternity ; when our conscience lays before us the dismal prospect of our crimes, and our imagination raises all the furies of hell to torment them ; shall we then approve our past pleasures, or condemn them ? Shall we esteem past greatness above innocence, or flown delights above virtue ? Alas ! at this fatal hour, when I behold things not through the mist of passion, but in their own colours, I shall change my judgment ; but God knows whether I shall be so happy as to repent, or so unfortunate as to despair.

Why then do I not live now, as I shall wish to have lived then ? Why do I not freely take my last farewell of all those things, I must once leave
of

of necessity? Why do I not repent now sincerely, whilst I have time, when perchance afterwards both time and desire will be wanting?

What can be the result of such a meditation, but a disengagement from all those things that render death frightful and unhappy, but a resolution of abandoning all the wild maxims of the world, and embracing those of Jesus Christ? And if we practise these, death will have nothing dismal but the name. For as sin gave it birth, so sin gives it all its terrour. Take this away, and death is nothing but a slumber, which casts us into a trance, to wake us in heaven.

O my God! Fix this last moment in my thoughts; and give me the courage to meet it, without any other concern than a sincere repentance, for having made so little preparation to receive it: I know it frights nature, and casts it into an agony and convulsions; but thy grace is able to turn its horror into pleasure, and its bitterness into sweetness. Tho' thou diedst, thou didst triumph over death by a glorious resurrection, and hast taught us by this victory, that thy power is without bounds, as by thy death, that thy mercy is infinite. This encourages me to implore thy grace, that, by a pious life, I may prepare for a happy death.

If it be profitable to ask ourselves, *Whither goest thou?* It is not less advantageous to enquire where Christ goes: he was now upon his return to his father, *I go to him that sent me*: that is, to heaven: but he was first to die, and so fulfil all the commands his Father had laid upon him. We all, by the merits of his sacred passion, have a just title to that holy land of bliss. *Where I am, there also shall my servant be*, John xii. 26. But then we must fulfil the conditions on which the title is grounded; *If ye keep my commandments*.

O my

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O my Redeemer! how much dost thou promise, how little dost thou ask? A moment of pain, for an eternity of pleasure. What proportion between the labour and the reward? One would think, no man would refuse so great a happiness on such easy terms: and yet, what is strange, not one of a thousand accepts the proposal. No; we will not baulk a passion, nor disoblige a sense, to gain Christ's favour; nor renounce a criminal attachment to the world, to purchase heaven. O my soul, where is thy reason? Where is thy faith? If thou dost believe an eternity of joy, it is stupidity to live as if thou didst not: and if thou dost hope to follow Christ into heaven, why dost thou not take the way he has marked out by his example upon earth, and by his precepts in the gospel? He is *the Way*; nay, and there is no other that leads to heaven. He is *Truth*, and protests that nothing but innocence, or repentance can convey us thither: *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish*, Luke xiii. 5. Thou canst not, my soul, rely upon thy innocence: *In many things we all offend*, James iii. 2. Lay hold then of repentance: detest all thy past miscarriages, and comply exactly with thy duty for the future.

Secondly, It was not only expedient, but necessary, for our salvation, to receive the Holy Ghost. Christ's death indeed opened heaven-gates, but grace gives us the strength to enter. This was to be communicated by the Divine Spirit, who would not come till Christ retired. *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you*. The descent of this Holy Spirit was the price of Christ's blood, a favour owing to his merits, the last seal of our redemption; and therefore he would complete the work, he had begun by his cruel death and glorious resurrection, before he sent the Holy Ghost to inflame the apostles, to preach with courage

rage the doctrine he had delivered, to oppose idolatry, and conquer the world by miracles, torments, and death.

It is true, he might have sent him before his departure; but the apostles were not fit to receive him: * they, says St. Augustin, had such a tender love for their dear Master, that they could not suffer his absence without violence, and this sensibility rendered them less fit to receive the Holy Ghost.

This seems strange! What deserved more love than Christ? What more just than to desire his presence? than to fear his absence? However, this affection was more tender than prudent, rather the effect of nature than grace: it was irregular, and sufficient to put a stop to the coming of the Holy Ghost. *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.*

O my God, how different are thy judgments from ours? Who would not have thought, the love thy apostles bore thee called rather for a reward, than a punishment? That it rather hastened the coming of thy Holy Spirit, than retarded it? But no: *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come*: As if he should say, your love is interested; it has more of the flesh, than of the Spirit, and rather natural, than Divine. This takes up your thoughts, that fasten upon my humanity, but seldom raise themselves up to my Divinity. I must therefore remove the sensible presence of my body from your eyes, that I may be present by faith: and thus free from passion, you will receive the Holy Ghost with more liberty and calmness, and consequently with more profit.

Let us by this learn, that all is not true virtue that appears such, not only to others, but even to

* *Illi non poterant capere spiritum quamdiu secundum carnem Christum nosse persistebant.* S. Aug.

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ourselves. We know not our own interior. Those affections, that seem most divine, may, for ought we know, be merely natural, and even stop at the creature, instead of flying up to the Creator. We frequently complain of our neighbours defects: we censure his conduct, and fancy that zeal alone draws out our complaints, and charity forces us into the place of a censor. But examine well, and perchance you will find, upon enquiry, envy has a greater share in your conduct than zeal, and a desire rather to blame than correct: ask then of God pardon, when you do ill; but go not into a conceit of your virtue, when you think you do well. Our conscience throws our sins before us; but God alone distinguishes true virtue from adulterate.

When the Holy Ghost is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me: Christ had made his Divinity credible by an infinity of miracles: he had cured the blind, and raised many from death to life: yet this stiff-necked people withstood all these evidences, and murdered their Saviour as a traitor and impostor. The Holy Ghost will condemn this obstinate infidelity, not only of the Jews, but of all those, who, after a due conviction, refuse to embrace Christ's doctrine, and to profess his religion.

But will not this condemnation fall upon Christians, as well as Jews and Gentiles? For tho' we confess him with our mouths, like those, of whom St. Paul speaks; we deny him in our actions, and this infidelity is not less criminal than the other: nay, it seems greater. Christianity seemed a scandal to the Jews, and a fable to the Gentiles. The mysteries were above reason, the morals quite against sensuality, and the principles of their education. These difficulties may plead for their infidelity in some measure; but we acknowledge

knowledge Christ for God, and continually blaspheme him: we crucify him with our oaths, and outrage him by our behaviour. We confess, he is the way that leads to life, by his example and precepts; and yet we neglect to imitate that, and to comply with these. *He will reprove, i. e. convince us of sin*; not indeed of infidelity, *because we have not believed in him*; but of negligence and folly, in squaring our actions not by our belief, but by our passions; in being Christians by profession, and bad ones in behaviour.

O my Saviour! I believe thou art my God who created me, as well as my Saviour who redeemed me. To thee I stand obliged for my being, and my redemption. Send down upon me thy Holy Spirit, not to condemn me as a sinner, but to comfort me as a true penitent: let him enable me to defend thy faith with my blood, and to follow thy footsteps in spight of temptation.

EPISTLE of St. James, Chap. i. Verse

22. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

23. *For if any be a bearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

24. *For he beholdeth himself: and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

25. *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

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26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridletb not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this mans religion is vain.*

27. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THERE were, it seems, in St. James's time (as well as in ours) some hereticks, who, to draw in profelytes, placed man's justification in faith alone, and condemned good works as unnecessary. In this epistle, he cautions all the faithful against this dangerous error; and assures them, they deceive themselves, if they think to enter heaven without the practice of good works: *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

It is not sufficient to believe all Christ revealed, unless we also practise all he taught. He obliges us to submit our wills to the laws he imposes, as well as our understandings to the mysteries he reveals. He is our great Master, and will have the two noblest faculties of man pay him homage: And tho' he could exact this acknowledgment without a promise of a reward; yet he has been pleased, out of his goodness, to reward our obedience with a happiness as great, as it is lasting.

Those, I speak to, are not guilty of this error; but he mentions another, from which some perhaps may not be exempt; who, because they frequent the church, hear sermons, and expositions of scripture, with pleasure and appetite; because the beauty of virtue raises transports of admiration, and the deformity of vice starts of horror in them; persuade themselves they possess all virtues in perfection,

tion, and hate vice to extremity. But St. James supposes we hear sermons on the excellence of virtue, and the foulness of sin, without practising that, or seriously flying this: *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* A conviction and admiration of the beauty of virtue is easily raised, when we find no opposition; but when we come to the practice, nature revolts, and this repugnance wipes off the favourable impression, and raises as disadvantageous ideas, as the first were pleasing.

St. James ascribes this to the want of a sincere and serious consideration of the capital truths of our religion: *If any be a bearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way; and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* The apostle would say, that the gospel is a glass, which we must consult to know our defects, by comparing our lives with the instructions we find; and that he, who only considers himself slightly, and as it were in passing, is like to reap no profit by the comparison: *He goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* We must not therefore be negligent hearers, or superficial readers of our duty: we must not go to sermons, to pass our time, but to hear our obligation; nor now and then turn over books of devotion to entertain our curiosity, but to kindle piety. We must by a constant reading, hearing and meditation, imprint Christ's laws in our hearts and memories; and daily compare what we do, with what he commands: and this will easily persuade us not only to *be hearers, but doers of the word*; and to be true Christians in practice, as well as in speculation.

For when we daily consider the punishment God has prepared for sinners, and the reward he promises virtue ; we shall easily resolve to avoid that, and to embrace this : when we seriously reflect on what Christ has done, and what he has suffered for us ; who will not be moved to make a return of gratitude, and to love that infinite Being, who has been fond of us to such a degree, as to stoop, even to assume our nature with all its infirmities (sin excepted) and to sacrifice on a cross, for our sakes, that life he took in the womb of his virgin Mother ? It is almost impossible for such reflections not to raise sentiments of love in the most obdurate heart : and when once we love him, we shall without pain obey his commands, and even follow his counsels. For nothing seems hard to one that loves ; and thus, in St. James's phrase, we shall not be *forgetful bearers, but doers of the word*. And what follows, but a beatitude for our reward ? *This man shall be blessed in his deed*.

O ! that we would but give half the time to the reading of pious books, we idle away, or spend on profane authors ! that we gave but half the attention to those that teach us our duty, and move us to comply with it, we do to those that laugh at goodness, and ridicule piety ! What a progress should we make in virtue ? How near should we come to the perfection our religion demands, and Christ requires ? With what peace of conscience should we live ? With what content should we die ? But alas ! It is our misfortune to misplace our care, and to take more to heart those things that lead us to our ruin, than those that secure our salvation.

St. James not only assures us, that faith alone will not justify us, but he specifies those vices we must fly, and those virtues we must practise. First, we must bridle our tongue, and keep it within the bounds

bounds of decency, and charity. *If any man seem to be religious, and bridletb not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* Without this caution, our religion is uselefs, our piety false; and those deceive themselves, who think to be saved without the government of this small, but unruly member. And tho' your faith be strong enough to remove mountains, if it be not enlivened by charity, you are of no value in the sight of God. *Tho' I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing,* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

In the first place therefore, purge your heart of all disorderly passion, and your tongue will easily be brought within the bounds of restraint, and discipline; for this always follows the inclination of the heart, and pours out the corruption that lurks within: by this the heart discharges all the ill humours that oppress and stifle it: so that, if jealousy, envy, hatred, lie within, the symptoms will seize upon the tongue, and break out into detraction and calumny.

Secondly, Take not up little stories, to relate them to the person they concern; this is a common fault even among those, who pretend to a more than ordinary piety. But let them not deceive themselves: those, who give their tongues this liberty, are far from being virtuous; their piety is counterfeit; their religion vain: *This man's religion is vain.* How displeasing such a practice is to God, he has declared in the *sixth chapter of the proverbs* after a most expressive manner. *These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood: an heart, that deviseth wicked imaginations; feet that be swift in running to mischief: a false witness that speaketh lyes, and him that soweth discord*
D 3 among

among brethren, Prov. vi. 16, 17, 18, 19. This last sin, so common, is more detestable in the sight of God, than the six former; and yet murder and perjury are sins of a very deep die. Nor are these whisperers displeasing only to God; they are despicable even to men. *A whisperer not only defileth his soul with sin, but shall be hated of all*, Eccclus. xxi. 28. Nay, and not only he, but even those that converse with him, shall fall under the universal aversion of mankind. And what wonder this sort of people would become thus hateful to God and man, seeing they violate directly the great law of charity, and undermine the very foundation of friendly society and commerce. I do not speak here of reports in matters of concern; for such carry their condemnation along with them; but I caution you against a liberty of speech in things that seem less important, yet oftentimes are not less prejudicial to peace and union; for oftentimes feuds and enmities arise from trifles, and are spread even through provinces and kingdoms by contagion. *The words of a tale-bearer, says the wise man, are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly*. Prov. xxvi. 22.

I heard such a one (say some) accuse your judgment, doubt of your discretion, and disesteem your merit: this seems no great matter; notwithstanding, these speeches, which shew more contempt than malice, will raise a bitterness, if not an aversion, against the person that spoke them; and God send the resentment go no farther. Few people take it well, to be thought unfurnish'd of those qualities; and some would take it less unkindly to be thought void of grace, than of wit. Keep therefore your tongue in discipline, speak nothing that may displease God, or mortify your neighbour.

And

And as you must not take the freedom to descant on your neighbour's failings; so never presume to entertain a company with your own merits. If God has favoured you with natural talents, thank him a thousand times for the favour; and be not vain, because your Maker has been liberal; but be sure, keep your virtues to your self: It is sufficient they are known to God, who one day will declare them in publick, and crown you with glory in the face of the universe. Imitate not the Pharisees, by promulging your good works. Such an unseasonable intemperance of the tongue shews you have nothing good but the appearance, and that you had been much more perfect, if your humility had been greater, and your vanity less. *If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to protect orphans, to comfort widows in their tribulation, to assist them with your counsel, and, if indigent, with your purse; to use your authority in their defence, and to protect them against violence and oppression. These are acts of true piety, if done out of a motive of charity, not of interest or ostentation: they extort praise even from the worst of men, and will receive a reward in time from the hands of God.

But even these acts of virtue, tho' in themselves sublime, tho' joined with faith, will not save us: And therefore St. James tells us, we must besides keep ourselves *unspotted from the world*; for, as St. John says, *If any man love the world, the love of God is not in him*, 1 John ii. 15. Our Saviour has declared it his enemy; he has thrown his curse upon it: *Woe to the world*, and laid it, as it were, under excommunication. Good God! how many give large alms, comfort the distress'd, pray often,

frequent the sacrament, and yet are not *unspotted from the world*? To these virtues they join great vices: they intrude themselves into companies continually, often into those that are dangerous, and sometimes prophane. They pass their time in indolence, ease, and idleness, affect grandeur, hate constraint, and are wedded to all the vain amusements of the world. Let such people practise a hundred virtues, their religion is not *pure and undefiled*. No: they must wean themselves from the love of the world, preserve their hearts from its corruption, and not only do good, but also abstain from evil.

I am sure, O God, my religion is pure; thou hast revealed it. Thy infinite knowledge hinders thee from being deceived, and thy veracity from deceiving me. Oh! that my behaviour was as unspotted as my faith; and that I had been as careful to comply with what thou dost command me to do, as with what thou dost oblige me to believe. But oh! neither thy menaces have been able to fright me into my duty, nor thy promises to allure me. To gratify sensuality, to oblige my passions, I have trespassed upon thy goodness, contemn'd thy laws, and withdrawn my neck from the sweet yoke of thy obedience. However, I cast my self at thy feet; and tho' my infidelities call aloud for vengeance, I trust thy mercy will seal my pardon. Amen.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. xvi. Verse

23. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

24. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

25. *These*

25. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.*

26. *At that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.*

27. *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour seems concerned his apostles had been so long in his company, without having the confidence to ask him a favour: *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.* By this he shews the excess of his kindness; that he is more prone to give, than we can be to ask, and that he tenders our good, more than we ourselves.

And that we may be sure to obtain of his Father all our petitions, he shews us an infallible expedient, which is to interpose his name: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* Without his mediation, the Father will grant nothing; and with it all things. Nay, he assures them, he will intercede himself: *I will ask my Father*; he will shew him the wounds he has received, the death he has suffered, by his Father's command, and for our sakes. How different is thy conduct, oh amiable Jesus, from that of men! Absence wears off not only love, but the very memory of friendship. Our inclinations change with our fortunes; and we not only forget friends, and relations

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relations in prosperity, but even our selves. But thou, O Lord, in heaven, dost remember thy poor friends upon earth : thou dost employ thy power to ease their afflictions, and impart thy grace that they may ask thy heavenly Father a release from their miseries, and thou dost make thy intercession that they may obtain it.

We must indeed desire all favours in Christ's name ; and if we ask St. Austin, he will tell us : " Those do not ask in the name of our Saviour, " who demand any thing hurtful to their salvation." Such people, tho' they pray from morning till night, deserve the reproach our Saviour made to his apostles: *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name.* Ye have prayed for wealth and honour : but alas ! ye have asked nothing in the name of Jesus, because ye have asked those things, that are so far from contributing to your salvation, that, in all probability, they will lead you to damnation. Ye should have asked a contempt of the world, and an entire disengagement from the love of all temporal things, that often ruin our souls, and never give the satisfaction we expect.

Sinners ! ye have ask'd nothing ; because ye have not implored his mercy ; because ye have not conjured his goodness to mollify your hearts, to melt your eyes into tears of a sincere repentance, to give you a true detestation of your past enormities, and a firm resolution to avoid them for the future. Demand this favour with humility, demand it with perseverance : you will certainly obtain your request. You have Christ's word for surety, *Ask and ye shall receive.* And how can we ask more properly in his name, than when we desire those things that are necessary for our salvation ?

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Let some ask wealth, others esteem, others health: I will demand these natural blessings, but with this *proviso*, if they conduce to God's honour, and my salvation; for nothing in this world is to be regarded, but in order to the next. Poverty will not shut heaven-gates against me, nor riches those of hell. I may live virtuously in sickness, and impiously in health; therefore *thy will be done*; I leave my destiny in thy hands, O Lord; and only desire what is advantageous to my soul, not what is pleasing to my body; what is agreeable to the profession of a Christian, not what suits with the maxims of a Pagan.

Keep me from sin, my Saviour! or, if I am so unfortunate as to fall, oh, force me soon back to repentance! remove all those objects from my eyes that withdraw my heart from thy affection; and rather cast me upon a dung-hill, with Job, in pain, poverty, and contempt, together with his virtues, than seat me on the throne of a prince, with his vices.

Some complain, that God, who is all bounty, all goodness to others, seems averse and severe to them; that they are almost drowned in sorrow, and overwhelmed with afflictions; that they have not only thrice with St. Paul cried out, *to be freed from them*, but oftener. And yet temptations encrease; pangs of conscience grow upon them; and they seem to have reaped no other fruit from their prayers, tears, and austerities, but a repulse. But they should reflect with St. Augustin, that, "some benefits are not denied, but are deferred, that the very timing of them may enhance their value."

You are tormented with scruples: your conscience persecutes you: you pray for ease: you find nothing but vexation and remorse: it is not yet time; some sin lies yet undiscovered, and unrepented;

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ed: your conscience is not clear of former offences: you must make a more strict scrutiny. When this is done, a calm will return, remorse will vanish, and all those furies that haunt a guilty conscience. Is it a refusal, to continue your pains in these circumstances? or rather is it not a favour?

But if this be not your case, perchance an interior peace may render you incautious, and fling you into a dangerous security. You may suppose you are above temptations, because you perceive none, and so insensibly run into pride and presumption; infallible fore-runners of a great misfortune. God therefore, to prevent your ruin, suffers you to be tempted, that you may learn your weakness by the inclination you feel to evil; that you may diffide in your own strength, to rely wholly on his assistance: that you may stand upon your guard, and avoid a surprise by a continual vigilance. This is only to defer, not to refuse. He will grant you peace; but when it is not prejudicial, when it will not forward your ruin, but secure your salvation.

Oh! what a happiness is it, to have leave to address so great a Majesty with our petitions! what a goodness, for such a Majesty, to importune us to lay before him our necessities! what a bounty, to grant all our demands made in the name of his Son; nay, and double the favour by a seasonable timing it to the exigence of our necessity! I will, O God, lay open my wants to thee with the reverence of a child, and the confidence of a beggar; but leave the grant of my request to the disposition of thy paternal providence.

But the best way to obtain favours of the Father, is not only to ask them in the name of the Son, but also to love him as your Saviour, and adore him as your Creator. *The Father himself loveth*

you, because ye have loved me. The love we bear Christ is the cause of the love the Father bears us, and of his liberality to us. Let us not flatter ourselves with old latitudinarian principles revived in our age: I acknowledge a God, pay my debts, injure no man, follow reason, and never embroil my thoughts with revelation. This is a religion *a-la-mode*, and virtue merely in name and cypher. True virtue supposes true faith in Jesus Christ; and the Father only loves those, who know and love him. These he hears; to these he imparts his favours; and will reward them eternally, if they persevere in their prayers, and continue in the practice of those virtues, Christ commands, and the detestation of all those sins he forbids.

O Redeemer! thy perfection, and my own interest, oblige me to love thee. Thou hast all that is charming, all that is amiable; thy power is without bounds; thy beauty beyond expression; thy goodness above comprehension; and thy bounty inexhaustible. Thou madest me of nothing; and when sin returned me to nothing, thou didst revive me by thy death, beautify me by thy scars, and cleanse me with thy blood. Thou didst not only take me into thy favour, but didst adopt me into thy family, and entitle me to thy kingdom. Could a poor creature receive more, or an infinite Bounty give more? Oh that I had a thousand tongues to praise thee, and as many hearts to love thee! I love thee as my Benefactor, and worship thee as my God; I fear thy justice, and place all my confidence in thy mercy.

I. EPISTLE of St. Peter, Chap. iv. Verse

7. *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.*

8. *And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

9. *Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*

10. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

The MORAL REFLECTION:

ST. Peter, in this chapter, exhorts the new converted Gentiles to leave the vices of Pagans, together with their religion; to form their lives by the precepts Christ has left; and to shew the sincerity of their conversion by the purity of their morals. And, in the first place, he excites them to prudence; because this is the rule and measure of all virtuous actions. Without it all actions are vicious, and with it, all are virtuous. “ True
 “ prudence, says St. Basil, is only a knowledge of
 “ what ought to be practised, and what omitted;
 “ whoever keeps up to it, will never decline vir-
 “ tuous actions, nor ever be branded with vice.”
 But the apostle means not human prudence, which our Saviour condemns, and St. Paul terms folly and madness. Christians need no incitement to the
 study

study and practice of carnal prudence. They learn it almost in their cradle, and practise it to their graves. Christian prudence, according to St. Augustine, is an act of the intellect, by which a man understands, that things eternal are far more valuable than temporal, and by consequence, that we must forgo all those sensual satisfactions, that oppose our enjoyment of heaven. Hence he concludes, that he alone deserves the name of prudent, who neither places his happiness in the enjoyment of earthly goods, nor his misery in suffering transitory evils; but bends all his care to the purchase of a happy eternity, by leading a virtuous life in this world.

Our blessed Saviour assures us, by almost twenty parables, that as our salvation is an affair of the highest importance, so it is attended with extreme difficulties. This he signifies by the vine, that must be cultivated with so much care; by the field that must be ploughed with so much assiduity. It is the narrow path, which few can find, and in which fewer have courage to walk. In fine, it is a little door, and few will stoop so low as to enter. And indeed, difficulties assail us from all parts. Some arise from concupiscence, which we must subdue; others from the rage of our passions, which we must fence within the bounds of reason. Our senses attack us on one side; pleasing, tho' sinful, objects on the other. Now, certainly, it is no easy task to break through these obstacles; to remove these difficulties, that lie in our way, and obstruct our passage to virtue.

The first act of prudence therefore consists in a serious and mature deliberation, to find out the best expedient to remove those difficulties that interpose between us and our salvation, and to chuse those means that are the most proper to effect it. For as in human affairs, when once we have fix'd upon a design,

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a design, we immediately fall upon the manner how we shall execute it; and bend all our application to find the most proper instruments to bring it to a happy conclusion: so in our spiritual concerns, prudence obliges us to take the same measures. Some creatures amuse us in our way to heaven, and others lead us quite from it. Those draw us into small offences; these into great sins. We must avoid the first, tho' they appear never so innocent, and absolutely break off with the latter, tho' never so agreeable or charming. Nor is it sufficient to abandon those things that impede our passage to heaven, but we must embrace all those means, tho' troublesome, tho' contrary to the inclination of sense, that lead us thither.

Hence you must look upon your former life, and examine what hath most powerfully withdrawn you from the duty of a Christian; what hath dissuaded you from the practice of those virtues, your religion requires, and God commands. Have you not turned those creatures, he created to raise you to heaven, into steps to descend into hell? what he gave you as slaves, not only into masters, but into idols? For even Christians too too often adore idols, as well as Pagans, and build them altars in their hearts, tho' not in temples. Hence St. Paul calls avarice downright idolatry, Gal. v. 10.

Hath not too little concern for small offences opened the door to greater: too violent a passion for friends weakened your love of God, and sometimes prompted you to renounce his friendship to preserve that of a creature? hath not a lukewarmness in religious duties extinguished all devotion, and a carelessness in your spiritual obligations turned you over to pride and passion? If you find these the causes of your past miscarriages, you must resolve, by the rule of prudence, to remove them.

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Who once has fallen down a precipice, must be stupid to play upon the brink a second time : and no pilot in his wits will steer upon a rock, he has once before split upon. Past misfortunes teach prudence ; and this only consists in removing the causes.

But when you have taken away these impediments, you must apply other positive means ; and these, in part, the apostle points at in the next words : *Watch unto prayer* ; address yourself to God ; implore his assistance, who, as St. James assures us, gives both grace and wisdom to those that ask them. Beg of him to raise your heart from the love of those things here below, which may cool your desire of those above, or slacken your pursuit of them. Attempt the practice of great virtues, but condemn not the exercise of the least. Those deserve a great crown ; and these also will have their reward. As heaven is the desired end of all Christians, so virtue is the means to arrive there. This is necessary to all states, to all conditions ; and therefore poverty will not excuse the peasant from it, nor wealth and grandeur the prince.

When you know the means, you must apply them *all* with constancy and diligence. I say, *all* ; at least those that are absolutely necessary. The neglect of one renders the use of all the rest unprofitable, and ineffectual. Some have no difficulty to pray, nor to read continually books of spirituality ; but then it is like death to them to think of mortifying their passions. They take fire at a word, and will rather part with their virtue, than a pettish humour. Others are insensible to vain honours, and strangers to thoughts of ambition ; but then they are slaves to avarice ; and you can no more persuade them out of this passion, than out of their nature. Every one has his

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dauling passion ; and altho' they sacrifice all others to God, this they keep to themselves: Like the Israelites, when they overcame the Amalekites, against the exprefs command of God, they spare, and appropriate the best things, and burn the worst. But as, by this policy, Saul lost his kingdom, so the nursing one favourite passion may ruin our souls. For generally this is the source of all our imperfections, the origin of all our vices ; and tho' we apply all other means, unless we sacrifice this *before the Lord*, as Samuel did Agag, we shall never arrive at our last end, the possession of God in heaven.

When you have pitch'd upon the means, fall to work with all diligence, and bear up against all difficulties with constancy. This is the counsel of a wise pagan, and a kind of *postulatum* in business. Consider first the enterprize in all its circumstances: And when you have taken your resolution, fall immediately upon the execution: defer it not a moment: A favourable opportunity seldom remains long: it presents it self only in passing, and never returns. Hence our Saviour has left us this so often repeated advice: *watch*, and stand night and day upon your guard. The foolish virgins came to the feast, but too late ; and so were sent back with an *I know you not*. How many Christians have been surpris'd with death, and forfeited their salvation, because they neglected an occasion that once was offered them ! Prudence therefore requires a great diligence, and an assiduous application in an affair of so great importance ; in which the least slackness may prove mortal.

Nor does it demand a less courage, or less constancy ; for it is a hard task to combat our passions ; to crucify the flesh ; to war upon our unruly inclinations. However, were this fight to last only a day, the shortness of the contest would abate the
strength

strength of the difficulty : but alas ! it continues our whole lives. There is no peace to be hoped for, no truce to be expected. For tho' we may quell our appetites, we cannot kill them. Their lives are interwoven with ours ; so that we cannot destroy them without offering violence to our selves. Tho' we have fought against the devil, and his most malicious emissaries, the flesh, and the world, with success, ten years ; yet, if we yield to their wicked suggestions the last moment of our lives, we first lose the fruits of all our former victories, and then enter into a never-ending series of torments for our last disloyalty. Constancy therefore to death, only crowns the virtuous actions of our lives : and seeing this lies out of our reach, and cannot be purchased by our own merits, we must beg it of God by those of his Son : *Be therefore sober and prudent*, O Christian reader ! prefer eternity to time, heaven to earth, God to all creatures. But stop not at a bare preference in speculation. Aim at the conquest of heaven, at the possession of God. Christ has mark'd out the way ; and all things necessary for the conquest lie before you. Apply the means with diligence, and encounter all difficulties with courage and constancy. There is no other prudence in this world, but to provide for happiness in the next.

Withdraw me, my God, from those creatures, I can neither love nor enjoy, without forfeiting thy love, and all title to the enjoyment of thee ; or at least give me strength to break those chains that detain me, and to detest those charms that allure my senses. Suffer not those creatures to endanger my salvation, which thou hast only given me to support my weakness. Nor permit me to flatter my sensuality, whilst I intend merely to serve necessity. Let me use all creatures as means, not as my final end ; which is thee alone, my God,

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who art alone the author of my being, and the end of my creation.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. xv. and xvi. Verse

26. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

27. *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.*

3. *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me.*

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning ; because I was with you.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour, in the foregoing words, complains of the obstinacy of the Jews, who would not receive him for their Messias, notwithstanding all the prodigies he wrought among them. He protests, their incredulity bears no excuse ; that their ignorance is not real, but affected, and rather serves to enhance, than to lessen their malice. *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them works, which none other man did, they had not had sin. But now have they both seen, and hated, both me and my Father, John xv. 22, 24.* The doctrine I have taught,

taught, the virtues I have practised, the miracles I have wrought, prove my Divinity: that I am the true Redeemer they expect, and no impostor.

Yet, to confound their obdurate hearts, or at least to soften them, I will give farther proofs that I come from God: for the Holy Ghost, and even you, shall bear testimony of me: *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father; he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness.* Yet this testimony of the apostles was nothing but an invincible patience in afflictions: for immediately our Saviour declares, that all the world shall conspire against them: that they shall be drag'd to tribunals, laugh'd at as fools; tormented as criminals; reviled as nuisances to nature, and publick enemies to heaven. Yet, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, they shall subdue their enemies by their doctrine, or their patience, and either overcome them by suffering the utmost effects of their rage with joy, or by dying with courage. No doubt but this fortitude of the apostles was an invincible demonstration of Christ's Divinity. For how could weak men, without a divine support, overcome a confederacy so universal against them? How could they break through so many oppositions, and endure such cruel, such unheard of torments, without an interior spirit, that either suspended the operation of sense, or buoyed up the imbecility of nature? So that at once the Holy Ghost, according to Christ's prediction, gave testimony of our Saviour, by strengthening the apostles to support, and thereby conquering persecutions.

What our Saviour foretold the apostles, St. Paul has declared to all Christians: *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution,* 2 Tim. iii. 12, And those, who behave

themselves, in the midst of pressures, as the blessed apostles did, not only testify they believe in Christ; but also, that they sincerely love him. They exercise all those virtues Christ commands, and fly those vices he forbids.

A true patient, that suffers for Christ on racks and wheels, acknowledges his Master's power to support him: he adores his justice in the very tormentor's rage, and his goodness in their fury: if God strikes him with the leprosy of Job, he kisses the hand that strikes him: if he deprives him of an estate, he sits down as content in poverty, as he was in abundance. Tho' he feels no consolation from within, and nothing but dissatisfaction from without, he bows to God's appointment, and adores his providence. And tho' his pains are excessive, he confesses his sins deserve greater: and at the same time a patient Christian not only gives a testimony of his faith in Christ, but of his love. For who will suffer for Christ, unless he believes he is able to reward his courage, or punish his cowardice? Who will for his sake exchange present pleasures for the most sensible torments, unless he loves him; or who can lay aside all the sentiments of nature, without the supply of supernatural grace?

Let us then, dear readers, if providence so ordains, give this testimony of our belief and of our love, not by preaching, as the apostles, but by suffering all calamities with patience. Follow rather the light of faith, than the faint glimmering of reason; and let grace triumph over the repugnance of nature. God is omnipotent; he can release you from those misfortunes that oppress you. He is merciful, and therefore has no greater passion, no stronger inclination, than to ease the distress'd. If therefore he does not, you must conclude he looks upon those things as good, which you esteem evils;

evils ; and that it is a greater favour to leave you happily miserable, than to make you miserably happy.

It is strange that the world should immediately raise all its forces against the apostles ; and that passion should cast all men into so desperate a blindness, as to persuade themselves they pleased God by murdering his creatures, and obeyed his commands by violating those of nature. *But the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, shall think that he doth God service,* John xvi. 2. Was their conduct irregular ? their lives scandalous ? their doctrine destructive to human society, or inconsistent with government ? no : they preached up sanctity, and practised it. They taught love to our neighbour, obedience to magistrates, and charity to all mankind. They shewed them the danger they walked in ; a heaven above to reward virtue ; a hell below to punish vice. They pointed out the way to avoid this, and to arrive to that. Indeed they divulged a new religion ; but then they confirmed it with so frequent miracles, that the most rational did conclude it came from heaven ; and the most obstinate could not with any colour of reason accuse it of imposture. What ground was here for such rage ? what cause for such hatred against the apostles, so inveterate, so universal ? how could they think it meritorious to destroy those men, whose lives were innocent, and whose religion was stamp'd with all the marks of a divine approbation ?

Alas ! the world was hardened in crimes it had no mind to leave ; inured to the worship of deities, that abetted impiety, and allowed all abominations. Men loved not to hear of a religion that restrained their ancient liberties, that confined their understandings to the belief of abstruse mysteries above reason, and their wills to the practice

of morality, contrary to the bent of nature. These pre-engagements presented every thing in a false light. Their wills blinded their understandings; and, tho' they could not hinder them from doubts, they diverted them from an assent to the doctrine proposed by the apostles, and from a serious examination of the motives. Whence their ignorance was merely affected, their zeal for their old religion criminal, and their conscience wickedly erroneous. So that, tho' they thought to please God by persecuting his ministers, they really offended him.

How many Christians imitate these Jews and Pagans! They affect an ignorance of their duty, that they may dispense with the practice of it, without scruple. They fear to look into a spiritual book, lest they should be disabused of their error; and will not ask advice, lest it should abridge their liberty. Hence they frame consciences *a-la-mode*, that is, erroneous: they act upon false principles, and suppose they lie under no mistake, because they will not take the pains to discover it. Hence sometimes they fancy they execute God's commands, whilst they transgress them: that they comply with those of the church, whilst they break them. They take great sins for small imperfections, and often persuade themselves those offences at most are only venial, which, notwithstanding, unrepented, will plunge them into hell. An inveterate rancour against their neighbour, passes for a just resentment; a natural antipathy, for a mere indifference; the most malicious detraction, for pleasantry; dangerous diversions, for innocent recreations. And you will see many confound criminal amours with friendship, and indecent liberties with the blameless name of familiarity: and upon this erroneous ground, they lull their consciences asleep; approach the throne of grace without

out confessing these transgressions; and then profane the holy sacrament of Christ's body and blood without remorse. Nay, like the Jews, they think, *they do God service*, whilst they abuse his holy Ordinances.

Whence comes this strange conduct, this deplorable blindness? From an affected ignorance; from a conscience guided by delusive principles; from a corrupt judgment and a debauch'd heart. They doubt whether such an action be lawful; if it either flatters their inclination, or suits with their interest, they neither ask counsel of scripture nor of reason; for they are afraid to find (what they have no mind to know) that it is sinful: in the mean time, they do it, first without remorse, and in process of time without scruple; and then suppose it no sin, because an acquired habit has wore out the doubt; and they repeat the action without reluctance. But they lie under a mistake: the first criminal negligence influences all the subsequent actions, and renders them no less sinful than the first.

We must, therefore, pray to God every day to pardon our ignorance; and, in all our doubts, have recourse to those, whom God has set over us for our guides. Rely not upon your own judgment: self-love will more easily bend it to what is pleasing, than to what is true. Our Saviour would not tell St. Paul what he was to do, nor leave him to his own conduct; but sent him to Ananias for instruction, to teach us, that all men are unfit to be their own masters, and improper casuists in their own concerns. Give me therefore, O Lord, a docile understanding, rather prepared to learn than to dispute; and a sincere heart, ready to comply with all those duties, that are incumbent on my profession.

O let

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O let thy Holy Spirit open my understanding, that I may know my duty ; and inflame my will with thy law, that I may fulfil it,

Acts, Chap. ii. Verse

1. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

2. *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

3. *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

5. *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*

6. *Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.*

7. *And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans ?*

8. *And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born ?*

9. *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,*

10. *Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes,*

11. *Cretes and Arabians ; we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

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The MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour, after his resurrection, often told his apostles, he must shortly leave them : *I go my way to him that sent me*, John vi. 5. and that they might bear the separation with moderation, he declared he withdrew his corporeal presence from them for their good : *It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* ver. 7. He will teach, comfort, encourage, and protect you ; he will mark out your duty, and supply you with strength to comply with it. And in expectation of this Holy Spirit, he ordered them not to stir out of the city, but that there they *should wait for the Promise of the Father*, Acts i. 4. with patience, humility and resignation.

Our blessed Saviour, however, tho' he took leave of the apostles with the most tender expressions of kindness, would not mark the day, nor month, this Divine Comforter was to descend upon them. By this reserve, he would teach both them, and all following Christians, that the entrance of this Holy Spirit into our souls, by grace, is not tied to any determinate time, but that he visits us when he thinks best, and we least expect him. *The wind bloweth where it listeth*, John iii. 8. And for this reason, we must continually invite him by our prayers and tears, and expect his coming with patience on the one side, and confidence on the other : and if he defers his visit, it is only for our good, to enflame our desires, to enliven our hope, and to render his presence more grateful and beneficial. If therefore temptations assail you ; if afflictions torment you ; implore his grace. And if you find not the effects of your sighs and groans to-day,
interrupt

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interrupt not your clamours to heaven : tho' he defers his peculiar succour, he will not refuse it, but even give you victory over your enemies, when you think your selves overcome ; and fill you with joy, when you apprehend to be drowned in sorrow.

After the ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem, and kept private: *They were all with one accord in one place.* It is true, partly our Saviour's command, partly fear of the Jews, confin'd them to secrecy and retirement : but yet an ardent desire also to prepare their souls, by prayer and contemplation, for the reception of their expected guest, persuaded them to solitude.

They had learn'd of their Master, that the best way to converse freely with God, is to withdraw our selves from the conversation of men : who, for this reason, retired so often into mountains and deserts, and sometimes absented himself from his very disciples, to teach us, that we must remove out of the noise of the world, to hear his voice ; and retire from the commerce of creatures, to draw down upon us his favours. Tho' therefore the apostles had assurance from the mouth of Christ, that they should receive the Holy Ghost ; that he should teach them truths, they were yet ignorant of, and should supply them with knowledge to confute the wisest men in the world, and with force to subdue the most potent ; notwithstanding, sensible of the greatness of the enterprize they were to execute by the appointment of their Master, and of their own weakness, they gave themselves wholly up to the practice of virtue in a close retirement, to move the Divine Spirit to replenish them with all gifts necessary for the discharge of the office laid upon them. For they knew they should receive his Divine influence in proportion to the dispositions he found in their souls ; and that

that repeated acts of a firm faith, of an unshaken hope, and fervent charity, were the most grateful preparation they could make.

We all need the assistance of the Holy Ghost, dear Christians, as well as the apostles : and tho', indeed, we are not designed to preach up a new law to Jews and Pagans, that seemed to these a folly, to those a scandal ; yet we must believe all the points of faith, and fulfil our duty, under pain of damnation. How shall we discharge these great duties, unless the same Spirit, that enabled the apostles, enlightens our understanding, warms our will, and breathes into our souls force to subdue the opposition of deluded reason, and the enchanting impressions of deluded sense ? And what more ready way to obtain this, than to retire sometimes from the hurry of worldly cares, as they did ?

When we perceive no enemy, we abandon our selves to a careless security : we think not of a remedy, if we feel no symptoms of a disease : and thus it often happens, that we fall into ambushes of the one, and are carried off by the violence of the other, before we dream of the danger. The most virtuous are surrounded with spiritual enemies : they nourish within themselves a secret mass of sin and corruption : and whilst they continually employ their heads and hearts on temporal things, they overlook the danger they are in. They neither consider their adversary's strength, nor their own weakness : and so never think to call God to their assistance, who alone can protect them. Is it not then necessary sometimes to enter into our closets, and there seriously to consider the present situation of our soul ?

It is impossible to bring to a happy conclusion an enterprize attended with many difficulties, unless with a mature deliberation, and cool thoughts,

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we examine it with all the accompanying circumstances, and pitch upon some efficacious means to break through all oppositions. Our salvation, without doubt, is a concern of importance, because an eternal misery or happiness lies at stake. Is it not exposed to great difficulties? The weakness of our will, the blindness of our understanding, and corruption of our heart, make it extreme difficult: and then the violence of our passions, the force of ill habits, the alluring impressions of sense, and the craft of the devil, encrease it beyond imagination.

How therefore can we hope for a happy success without a particular attention; without continual endeavours to discover the artifices of our enemies, to fly those snares that are laid to entrap us, and to obtain those graces that must support us? Whilst we are engaged in the concerns of the world, it is hard to spend a thought on those that regard eternity. We are taken up with visits, with great designs and diversions, and rather offend God, than sue for his protection. Retirement is the only means to give us a clear prospect of our danger, and leisure to find a way to avoid it. Tell me not, your state permits you not to keep your chamber; that business continually calls upon, and takes up all your time.

Were you distempered, would you not interrupt your application to business to recover health? and is the health of the body more valuable than that of the soul? have you a more important affair than that of your salvation? does a Christian dare to say, or even to think so? why then will you not take, at least, as much care of the one, as you do of the other?

The apostles had almost finish'd a retreat of ten days, in continual expectation of the so often promised Holy Spirit; when (on the day of Pentecost)

cost) suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind; and it filled all the house, where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

God chose, by an admirable providence, the day of Pentecost for this great mystery, that is, the anniversary of the promulgation of the old law to declare to the world the new; and abolish'd a religion founded on fear, and temporal blessings, to make room for that of the Messias, built on love, and promises of eternal happiness. The descent of this Holy Spirit in a moment changed the apostles into other men.

Before, they were not able to understand those truths, our Saviour taught them three whole years, with no less charity than patience; *They understood none of these things*, Luke xviii. 34. They were scandalized at some truths, and soon forgot others. But now the Holy Ghost, of idiots, made them doctors. They not only remembered those mysteries Christ had revealed, but also understood and believed them. They practised the duties of the most sublime perfection: and those very men, who would have dissuaded their Master from dying on the cross, as ignominious, suffered contumelies, reproaches and stripes, not only with patience, but even with joy and pleasure.

All former symptoms of fear vanish'd from their hearts. The fire, that descended from heaven, enflamed them with zeal and charity. They forgot their own safety, to promulge their Master's Divinity; and resolved to sacrifice their lives wholly to his interest. Immediately St. Peter began his mission with no less courage than success: for, in two sermons, he converted eight thousand, and persuaded those very people to adore him as God, whom,

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whom, fifty-two days before, they had murdered as the worst of men.

In fine, twelve fishermen *filled with the Holy Ghost*, without credit, human science or eloquence, overcame philosophers, orators and princes; and persuaded not only the barbarous, but also the civiliz'd world, to abandon those religions, error first establish'd, and impiety maintain'd and propagated; to adore a crucified God; to receive truths, so far above the reach of reason, and principles of morality, so severe to sense. And when they could not conquer the obstinacy of idolaters, neither by reason nor miracles, they confirmed their doctrine by their sufferings, and sealed with their blood the testimony they had given of their Master's Divinity. Nothing but an impulse of the Divine Spirit could animate them to such a stupendous enterprize: nothing but the same Spirit could execute it with instruments so weak, so disproportionate, in all appearance, to the greatness of the design.

This Holy Spirit, that descended visibly on the apostles, will enter into the souls of all Christians, if they ask the favour with confidence, and make those preparations these blessed men did for his reception: *The Father will give his Holy Spirit to those who ask it.* For tho' the promise was made immediately to the apostles, it reaches every member of the church: and if we receive it not, we must accuse our own negligence, not suspect his fidelity.

If you desire to know, whether you have received this Holy Spirit; examine your mind, and look into the present disposition of your soul. If your conscience reproaches you with any grievous sin unrepented; if you are indolent in the service of God, unconcern'd for his glory, indifferent in religion, afraid to profess it, and negligent in the practice

practice of its duties; if you postpone your salvation to the love of any creature, and your duty to interest or pleasure; you have not received the Holy Ghost. Its effects are quite contrary: it is a fire that warms the most frozen hearts; it infuses a desire to advance God's glory, and courage to remove all obstacles. It seats us above fear; above human respects, and turns all worldly affections into divine. In a word, it produces a calm conscience, pious desires, and an inward peace that surpasses the satisfaction of sense, and can only be express'd by those that feel it.

O Divine Spirit! how often have you called upon me to receive a visit? and how often have I refused to receive you? You have knocked at the door of my heart by a thousand inspirations; and I as often have denied them admittance, to entertain objects often sinful, and always vain or frivolous. Inflame my cold heart with a sincere love of thee, and an ardent zeal for thy glory. Give me a firm resolution to serve thee, a courage to break through all opposition, and crown my purpose with perseverance.

GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. xiv. Verse

23. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

24. *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings, and the word which you hear, is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*

25. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.*

26. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall*

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teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

28. *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you: If ye loved me, ye would rejoyce, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I.*

29. *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

30. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and bath nothing in me.*

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do; arise, let us go hence.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

IF our blessed Saviour's outward form was so majestick as to draw respect, it was so amiable at the same time, that it raised love. So that the apostles, who were bless'd three whole years with his presence, and enjoy'd his conversation, were so taken with the one, and so captivated with the other, that they could not think of a separation without sorrow. But there was certainly more of nature in this love, than of the Spirit; and therefore our Saviour told them: *If they really loved him, they would rather rejoyce at his departure, than grieve.*

The apostles were so sway'd by self-love, that they loved themselves more than their Master. For tho' they fancied they loved him purely for himself; yet, in reality, they loved him for themselves. They took more pleasure to see him, than to serve him;

him; and were more taken with his presence, than his person. For, had they regard to their Master's interest, would they have repined at his ascension into glory? or opposed their desire to the decree of his eternal Father? *They loved, yet they did not love; They loved indeed sweetly, but not prudently. Their love had more of sense than of reason: they loved their Saviour, but not their salvation:* for he had assured them *, the Holy Ghost would not come till after his departure.

This example reads all Christians a lesson of caution against self-love; and at the same time of its evil nature, which is able to violate the love of the most amiable object. This vice is so tied to our corrupt nature, that it is extreme hard to shake it off. It appears under so many innocent, so many pious disguises, that nothing but a great circumspection, and serious reflection, is able to distinguish it from genuine charity. Hence *Many find themselves deceived in the end.* They thought they laboured for God's honour; yet, in reality, they drudg'd for their own. They imagined they mortified some passion, but they gratified others; that they sought only to please God, but only pleased themselves; that they followed the Spirit of truth, yet found themselves deluded by that of error. If you feel an impulse towards a virtuous action, which your state will not permit you to execute, tho' you are persuaded you have no other design but to please God, stand upon your guard: you may easily mistake nature for grace, and love of your self for the love of God: And it is an infallible sign, self-love has a greater part in the enterprize than true zeal, if the disappointment casts you into trouble and disquiet: for sincere charity is calm and patient; it undertakes great things for God's glory, but chearfully leaves

* St Bernard.

the event to providence, without being transported at good, or dejected at bad success. How many in sickness pray for health, and, as they think, out of a motive of serving God? But it is ten to one self-love lies at the bottom covered with the appearance of piety; and a desire of ease has a greater share in our prayers than God's service. For did we regard merely his honour, we should receive, with an equal submission, good and evil, sickness and health. We should conform our wills to his, which is the height of perfection.

To disabuse the apostles, who thought their love not only reasonable but disinterested, our Saviour told them, *If a man love me, he will keep my word.* The test of that love I require, is not an eager desire of my presence, but an entire submission to my Father's will; an exact observance of my commands, and a strict practice of my counsels. By this we prefer God before all creatures; his love to our own satisfaction; and his favour to our lives. Hence, whosoever chooses poverty before an estate purchased at the price of injustice; who embraces pain rather than an unlawful pleasure, and rather forfeits his liberty by confinement, than to live abroad a slave to sin, possesses that love Christ exacted of his disciples: *If a man love me, he will keep my word.* This is the touchstone that distinguishes true love from counterfeit, That of our selves, from That we owe to God.

Would you therefore know whether you love God sincerely? examine not how often you frequent the church; how many hours you spend in prayer and recollection; how largely you supply the necessities of the poor: these are no infallible marks, and may be visible in those, who doat on the world, as well as in those who love God: you must bring your conscience to our Saviour's rule; *If any man love me, he will keep my words.* Dive to the bottom;

bottom ; search the most secret recesses of your soul, and see, if no monster of rebellion against God's commandments, no neglect, no contempt of his counsels, start up against you : if you stand clear of any trespass upon God's commands ; if you have neither offended his person by oaths, nor his servants by raillery ; if you love your neighbour, honour your parents, and pay obedience to your prince ; if you abuse not your neighbour's person, nor wound his reputation, nor invade his goods ; if your thoughts are chaste, your words decent, and your body untainted with lewdness ; if you neither omit what is commanded, nor do what is prohibited : you then have that love God absolutely requires.

And, in return of this love, our Saviour assures his apostles: *That he, and his Father, will come unto them, and abide with them.* The holy fathers explain this visit of the Father and the Son, this abode, to be the infusion of sanctifying grace into the souls of those that love him. By this God visits us ; by this he lives in us ; by this, to use St. Paul's expression, we become the temple of the Holy Ghost. What a favour this is, we shall only conceive, when, in the next life, we suffer eternal torments, for having forfeited it in this by sin ; or rejoyce in heaven, for having preserved it by the practice of virtue.

But the gift is not less, because ignorant man comprehends not its value : and indeed, it is our misfortune, that we seldom esteem those things that come not within the reach of sense ; so that it is hard to raise any lively idea of those goods that are supernatural ; because they touch not sense, and make no impression upon its organs. However, we must not only bid adieu to faith, but also to reason, not to rate it above all created things, if we consider the strangeness of its effects. This

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divine quality raises us to the dignity of children of God; it intitles us to the kingdom of heaven; it adopts us brothers to Christ, and gives us a right to all the benefits of his passion; it makes us amiable in the sight of God: whilst we preserve it, he cannot hate us; when we lose it, he will not love us. Had the damned sanctifying grace in the midst of flames, they could not be miserable; and were the saints without it, even in heaven, they would not be happy. Those unfortunate wretches now understand perfectly the price of this jewel. They will eternally deplore the loss of it, and wish eternally, but in vain, once more to find it. They lost it by their crimes in time; and a too late repentance of the loss, and an unprofitable desire to recover it, will make one part of their torment for all eternity. Seeing therefore the possession of it gives us an undoubted title to the most transcendent good, and the privation of it, to the utmost extreme of evils; we must conclude, its value rises in proportion. With what care then, with what vigilance, ought we to preserve this treasure, which so highly concerns us? God has not trusted it with our dearest friend, but with our selves: so that all our enemies are unable to wrest it from us without our consent.

And yet we part with this jewel, not only without trouble, but often without resistance, and look upon our misfortune without concern. The scripture tells us, Esau was inconsolable, when he reflected at how low a price he had sold his birth-right: he complained of circumvention and treachery, and shewed his regret by all the marks of complaints and expostulations. Notwithstanding he only forfeited some superiority in the family, some temporal blessings, which might make him more wealthy and powerful, but not better.

But

But the loss of sanctifying grace divests us of all title to heaven, to the felicity of saints. It exposes us to the anger of God, who cannot but hate us: who threatens to revenge the affront, and has power to execute his resolution. It deadens our virtuous actions, and renders all our past mortifications, and all our merits, unprofitable. Notwithstanding this, we often pawn it for a trifle, and never think of redeeming it by a sincere repentance. Christians may pretend some excuse for falling into sin; they may throw their miscarriage upon the violence of the temptation, the heat of passion, or the solicitation of occasions; but what colour of an excuse can we cast upon our neglect to recover, by repentance, that grace we have lost by sin? has sin such agreeable charms, when once it is committed, when nothing remains of it but shame and remorse? how often do we confess, that the pain of sin surpasses the pleasure; and that the sting, it leaves behind, takes off all the impressions of the delight? should not this plain confession, founded on experience, awaken our industry, and set all the powers of our soul to work, to recover this nuptial garment, without which, we shall be excluded from that feast God has prepared for his elect, and be condemned to the eternal torments of weeping and gnashing of teeth?

Our blessed Saviour has taught us, with what earnestness we should endeavour to find this treasure, by the parable of a poor woman: she lost but a drachma, yet immediately removed the lumber of her house, swept it clean, look'd into every corner, and when she found it, called in her neighbours to testify her joy, and to receive their congratulations. And yet, good God! what comparison between the loss of a piece of money, and that of grace? Christ bought this at the price of his sacred blood; and no body, but God made man,

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was able to make the purchase. Shew then you esteem it, by your care and solicitude to preserve it; and, if you lose it, either by surprise or passion, sit not down quietly with the loss, but employ sighs and tears, and all the requisites of a true repentance, to recover it.

Come, Holy Spirit! visit thy unworthy servant, and fill with thy holy grace my heart created for thy service: pour into my soul a true love of thee, and an aversion for all below thee; strengthen the frailty of nature by the force of thy grace; and bring peace to my soul alarmed with fear, certain she has offended, and doubtful of pardon: keep my enemies so at a distance, that, under thy protection and conduct, I may conquer them, and praise thy holy name for ever.

I. EPISTLE of St. John, Chap. iv. Verse

7. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.*

8. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*

9. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

12. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

13. *Hereby*

13. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

14. *And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

15. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

16. *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE holy apostle, and beloved disciple, employs all his zeal to persuade men to love God, and his only Son Jesus Christ. He brings reasons to inflame us; he explains the consequences, and lays down the effects most advantageous, and able to melt into love the most obdurate heart.

The first motive is, because God loves us. An infinite Being disdains not to settle his affection upon a poor creature, that has nothing amiable, but his Creator's gifts; nothing remarkable, but his ingratitude: Yet this great Majesty is pleased to stoop his affections to a worm of the earth, to a rebel, to a traitor: nay, he has carried his love to such an excess, as to send his only Son into the world to break his chains, to purchase his liberty, and to rescue him from death by his own: *In this was manifested the love of God towards us; because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live through him.* This indeed is a strong argument of his love. To redeem a slave, he has sent his Son; and sacrificed him on a cross, to save a rebel. But if this be an evident argument of God's love to us, is it not as powerful

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ful a motive for us to love him? And if this is unable to force a return of love, we deserve to be banish'd into the wilderness among savage bears and tigers. We were lost: God sent his Son on earth to find us. We were in slavery: he commanded him to release us. We were condemned to torments: he revers'd the sentence, by the punishment of his Son, and restored us to our former dignity by his humiliations: and shall we not love the Son, who redeemed us, and the Father, who gave him?

I confess, O Jesus, thou art my Redeemer. I acknowledge thee for my God. I adore thy Majesty, and love thy goodness: to thy pains I owe my liberty: to thy death my life. O Father of mercy! God of love! What shall I return for all thy favours, but an humble acknowledgment of my incapacity to give any thing? My very being is thy pure gift, and all that I possess, the effects of thy liberality. Nothing belongs to me, but sin and corruption; misery in this life, and torments in the other: to these I had right, before I was born. I was a criminal the same moment I was a man; and had continued the eternal object of thy wrath, had not thy dearest Son cancelled my sins by his blood, and reconciled me to thy favour by his death. I love thee, O God, for the favours I have received; but more for thy own amiableness. Nothing deserves love but for thy sake; and thou dost deserve all for thy own.

Seeing God has so tenderly loved us, the apostle concludes, we must love one another. *Dearly beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another:* and consequently, not only our friends and relations, but our greatest enemies: *Herein is love, not that we loved God.* God manifested the excess of his love to man, because he saw nothing in him that deserved his affection, and
much

much that called for hatred and aversion. He was a prevaricator, a rebel, in fine, his professed enemy. Notwithstanding, *he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* We must imitate this great pattern, and love those who hate us; spare no counsel for their consolation, no expence for their support; and when we cannot supply their wants with money, we must sweeten their sufferings by a sincere compassion.

And if we do this, St. John assures us, *God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* He unites himself to us by love, which is a participation of the sovereign and increated Love, God himself. O happy soul, in whom God abides! What need he fear, who is guarded by the Omnipotent? What can he want, who possesses him that possesses all things? He gave me his Son, when I was his enemy: what will he refuse, since he loves me as his friend? Let me then abide in my brother by love, that thou may'st remain in me by love here, and I in thee eternally in heaven.

But besides this union, the love of God, and our neighbour, gives us another remarkable advantage, set down in the same place; *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.* When all creatures shall tremble, and nature fall into convulsions, at the awful majesty of the impartial Judge; those that have love for God, and charity for their brethren, shall stand at the bar as it were without commotion. No virtue can procure this calm; none can raise this confidence, but love. Other virtues may consist with vices: I may be chaste, and yet a murderer; sober, and yet sacrilegious. But true love excludes all sin, and embraces the excellency of all virtues. This is the very perfection of the gospel;
the

the most sublime acknowledgment a creature can make of his Creator's greatness, and his own dependency.

But if you will know whether you have this true love, take a survey of your conduct, and compare it with our Saviour's. If it squares with his, you may conclude, *God dwelleth in you*, and that *love is perfected in us, because as he is, so are we in the world*; because our lives resemble that our blessed Saviour led, when he was in the flesh among us. It is a madness to persuade your selves, with some (who set up for Christians, yet have scarce any thing of the man) that you may love God and the world; prostitute your body to pleasure, and give up your heart to God. What harm (say they) do I commit against my Maker, when I oblige sense, and indulge liberty to nature? Is he dissatisfied, because I am pleased? or angry, unless I live in torment? I love him, tho' I do not hate myself; and pay him homage, tho' sometimes I gratify a passion.

But let not these people deceive themselves: love cannot consist with disobedience, nor charity with the breach of the decalogue. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*, John xiv. 21. (says Truth itself) and, consequently, he that does not observe them, is void of love, and a stranger to charity. Such men will not have *boldness in the day of judgment*, with the true lovers of God; but will fall into despair, with his enemies, and be condemned, not only for sinners, but hereticks.

True love includes a preference of God's friendship to that of all creatures, a resolution rather to die than offend him. Are these consistent with the breach of his commands, with the transgression of his laws? Do we not prefer a creature to him, when we forfeit his friendship, incur his

his hatred, to enjoy it? Does he not tell us, that without the observance of his precepts, we shall be excluded his glory, and condemned to torments? *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, Matth. xix. 17. And yet we violate his laws, disobey his commands, postpone him to creatures, give up the expectation of a future glory for a present satisfaction, and at the same time persuade ourselves we love him.

No, dear Christians, run not into an illusion so unreasonable, so dangerous. True love requires an exact obedience to all God has commanded, a real aversion to all he has forbid. It unites us to him, and him to us; so that we have, as it were, but one heart, and one will. The objects of his love, are the objects of our affection; his will is the rule of ours, and his desires the term of our wishes. We receive, with an equal joy, good from his hands, and evil; and embrace, with the same thankfulness, pain and pleasure, prosperity and misfortunes. When God dwelleth in us, what can we desire more? When we abide in God, what need we fear? His presence gives all good, and defends from all evil.

O the happy state of a soul, that truly loves God! she is in God, and consequently enjoys a paradise upon earth, a lively image of an eternal one in heaven.

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GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. vi. Verse

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven :

38. Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom : For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.

39. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind ? shall they not both fall into the ditch ?

40. The disciple is not above his master : but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye ?

42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thy self beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR Saviour, in all this chapter, exhorts his disciples to love and charity ; to forgive injuries ; to do good to all, and harm to no body. Nor does he restrain his command to friends or relations : *For sinners also love those that love them :* This is, at most, a kind of Jewish virtue. His disciples must extend their kindness to their very enemies.

mies. Love your enemies, without the expectation of interest or gratitude, or any natural inclination of sympathy and honour. God's conduct to sinful man must be the pattern of ours to an offending brother; and our love must be as disinterested as sincere. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.* Now how does God treat his enemies? He stands not upon his prerogative, nor presently makes use of his just title to revenge the affront. No: he makes the first step to regain his enemies; to make up the breach, and to conclude a reconciliation: he pursues him with his grace, raises his conscience against him, and displays the foulness of his offence, with all its dangerous consequences: he mollifies his heart, enlightens his understanding, and subdues his will. For alas! without God's assistance and invitation, a sinner can't make one step to his conversion, not so much as in thought. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

We must therefore frame our mercy by his, and behave ourselves, in regard of our enemies, as God behaves himself towards his. Have you been affronted with insult and outrage? First forgive the offence in your heart, and then endeavour a reconciliation. Stand not upon the punctilios of honour and custom, and oppose not the maxims of the world to those of the gospel. Make the first advance, and expect not submission, much less satisfaction, before you enter upon a treaty. You need apprehend no infamy: God's own example is a warrant for your conduct, and Christ's command your justification. What is pleasing to him must be reputable before men. His judgment is the true standard of honour and infamy. And how can we frame a more clear judgment of his, than by his example?

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Contemn then, my soul, all the corrupt principles of the world, to embrace those of thy Redeemer. Comply with his commands, and he will rake care of my reputation: or if I lose it in the esteem of men, I shall be more honourable before God, who esteems him more who pardons an affront, than him who revenges one.

The mercy of God consists not solely in the pardon of his enemies, but also in a liberal dispensation of favours. Ours must be of the same nature. We must not only lay down all resentment, but, if possible, the very memory of an offence; and, besides, supply their wants with chearfulness and liberality; and our Saviour assures us, God himself will be bound for the payment: *Give, and it shall be given unto you.* Nay, he leaves to our election the recompence of our charity: and, to encrease it the more, promises to proportion the return to the greatness of our liberality: for with the same *measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you again,* Luke vi. 38.

Oh the goodness! Oh the merciful compassion of our God! who puts all the alms, all the good turns done our neighbours to his own account, and protests he will pay all with usury. He will give measure for measure; but, as St. Bernard notes, God's measure is without measure; as his riches have no bottom, his liberality has no end. For a mite, he returns glory without end in the other world, and a thousand blessings in this. Never yet was any man worse in his temporal affairs for charity, and hundreds better. God has doubled their fortunes to admiration, and sometimes by miracle; to shew the world, that he never deceives those, who rely on his word; and that he returns not only more than he is obliged, but even more than he promises.

And

And he spake a parable unto them ; Can the blind lead the blind ? shall they not both fall into the ditch ? The effect of a blind guide is to throw himself from a precipice, and to involve those he conducts in his own ruin. Seeing therefore a guide is necessary, it is every one's interest to chuse a sure one. Trust not the exterior. Wolves sometimes take the shape of lambs ; and a heretick will speak the language of a true Christian, to instil errors with more facility and less danger. Let his manner be no less suspected than his doctrine : he that is not virtuous, will scarce take the pains to instruct others in the practice of it ; and if his faith be unsound, he will certainly inspire errors. Direct, O Lord, my steps in this dangerous voyage. Do thou lead me, teach me my obligation, and give me the will to comply with it.

Our Saviour condemns here a conduct very common in the world, and yet no less sinful. It puts on the mask of zeal ; yet is really hypocrisy, and bitterness. We cry out against lax morals, corruption and debauchery : we censure the pride of one, the intemperance of another. In the mean time, we cast not one glance of an eye upon ourselves, and never think of correcting in our own conduct, what we declaim against in others. How do laymen hold forth upon the failings of the clergy ? One would think the gospel was only made for churchmen ; that the Obligation reach'd not others : seculars are for the reformation of religious, and citizens for that of the court. In fine, our false zeal cries out for the correction of our neighbour, but never for our own. *Thou Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye.* Begin the reformation at home, before you extend your care abroad. Examine your conscience ; look into your own conduct ; cut off all irregularities, and model it by the rules of your profession. Let your neighbour alone ;

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he will suffer for his vices, if he does ill, and be rewarded for his virtues, if well. His concerns regard you not. If any thing wants reformation, leave it to superiors, to whom that care belongs. Encroach not upon their office, and increase not the evil by invectives and satire. In fine, *Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.* Correct all your own failings, quell the passions of envy and aversion, and then it will be time to extend your zeal to the conversion of others. But so long as you are guilty of great crimes, and rail at small oversights, who will not think you are in jest? or that you rather labour to publish your neighbour's faults, than to mend them? to impair his fame, than to reduce him to his duty?

I wish, O God, that all tongues and nations serv'd thee! That thy name was hallowed on earth, as it is in heaven! And that all those, that believe in thy Son, liv'd up to his maxims! I desire their conversion, who stray from their duty; and pray for their perseverance, who faithfully discharge it. But I will never censure those, and always encourage these. I will enter into my own concerns, with which alone I am entrusted; I shall not be answerable for others sins, but shall be punished for my own.

I. EPISTLE of St. John, Chap. iii. Verse

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.*

15. *Who-*

15. *Whoſoever hateth his brother, is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, becauſe he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

17. *But whoſo hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?*

18. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

SCARCE did the Chriſtian religion appear in the world, but it was attack'd on all ſides. Its profeſſors were ridiculed by ſome, ſcorned by others, and perſecuted by all. St. John exhorts them, neither to be diſcouraged, nor diſmayed ; but to bear up againſt the ſtream with reſolution: *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* Our bleſſed Saviour foretold this animoſity to his diſciples, and his prophecy was accompliſhed in himſelf, who fell a victim to hatred ; and in all his followers, who have met with the ſame treatment. And St. Paul has ſet it down as an infallible truth: *All that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall ſuffer perſecution,* 2 Tim. iii. 12. And what wonder the ſlaves of the world declare war againſt Jeſus Chriſt, who condemns the world with its principles and practice, and commands his followers never to make peace with this mortal and dangerous enemy ; ten times more pernicious when it fawns, than when it frowns upon us ; when it loves, than when it hates ?

But, bleſſed be God ! we cannot receive any harm from its hatred, unleſs we will ourſelves. It may

us to abandon Christ. It may employ both threats and allurements, to engage us to take part with it; but it can overcome only those, who voluntarily submit to its slavery.

Let then, dear Christians, men of the world laugh at your piety : Pity their stupidity ; but blush not at your duty. Vice indeed is shameful, but not virtue : and even those, who hate it, cannot hinder themselves from esteeming it. So that when they slander and persecute you, 'tis not because they think you worse, but better than themselves. The regularity of your life lays before their eyes the horror of theirs. This tacit reproach makes them uneasy ; and they love not to be reprov'd for those crimes, they have no resolution to amend.

Go on therefore with courage in the happy career you have begun ; and be no less bold in the practice of virtue, than they in that of vice. If they endeavour to fright you with satire and sarcasm from your duty, you may with better reason deter them from their enormities with a prospect of hell, which will be their eternal habitation, unless they turn penitent, and wash out with tears those sins, that, unrepented, will cast them into an everlasting despair. One mark of a disciple of Jesus Christ is persecution, the other is patience : that comes from malice, this is a Christian virtue ; and the exercise of it being hard, the reward will bear proportion to the difficulty.

God will avow, and praise, in the presence of men and angels, the conduct of those who have confess'd his name, and embraced his morals in spite of rage and railery. And he will as openly condemn theirs, who have endeavoured to laugh and persecute their brethren out of their piety and religion. Oh ! the satisfaction, to be praised of God, who neither errs in his judgment, nor flatters in his expression !

expression! Oh! the misfortune, to be condemned by him, from whose sentence there is no appeal!

Tho' the world hates the followers of Christ, his disciples are forbid to hate them. They must indeed hate their vices, but, at the same time, love their persons. And St. John declares all those to be murderers, who hate their brethren: *Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer*, and liable to the pains of homicides: *And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him, i. e.* hatred has cut off his title to heaven, by destroying sanctifying grace, which gives us a right to eternal life.

But of what hatred speaks the Apostle? Not of antipathies of nature, or disputes which arise from a contrariety of humours and interests. God forbid, such small misunderstandings should make us guilty of homicide, and turn us over to the punishment of murderers and adulterers: but he speaks of those, who cannot endure the sight of a brother; whose presence they cannot support with Christian temper, nor even hear of his prosperity with common decency; who envy his happiness, and rejoice at his ruin; such people have not *eternal life abiding in them*. Their hatred is mortal; and, if they desire their brother's death, they stand at God's tribunal guilty of homicide. Our Saviour has declared this in very clear terms in another case. *Whosoever*, says he, *looketh on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart*, Matth. v. 28. And consequently he, who wishes his brother's death, tho' he does not procure it, is guilty of the malice, tho' not of the exterior act of murder.

What shall we say of those, who, in fits of anger and passion, wish their brother dead, and sometimes send him to hell. Nothing but want of reflection can excuse them from a deadly sin, from

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homicide, and a crime of a deeper dye. For as the death of the soul is a greater evil than that of the body ; so to wish it seriously, must be a sin of a blacker nature.

People are wont to excuse themselves with the pretext, they were in a passion : I believe it ; for what Christian in cold blood would break out into such an unseemly language ? But the question is, whether your tongue prevented reason, whether you reflected on what you did : if your heart agreed with your tongue, you fall within the compass of murder. Passion, 'tis true, has a strange ascendant over reason ; and therefore Seneca calls it a short madness : but after all, 'tis hard to extinguish it ; and therefore I am of opinion, that not one of a hundred continues in these unchristian imprecations without a mortal offence ; for it is almost impossible, for a passion to be so intense, for a considerable space, as to leave no room for reflection, no place for the exercise of reason. These passionate expressions (to give them the softest name) often come even from those, who make profession of piety ; but custom cannot render them innocent, nor any pretended devotion, warrantable. They are commonly extremely sinful, and always marks of a depraved heart, and of an ungovernable passion.

Hate therefore no body, but yourselves : this is lawful, nay even commanded : there is no danger of excess. It is more to be feared, we shall still love ourselves to our ruin. *He that loveth his life, shall lose it*, John xii. 25. And he who hateth it, shall find it. Oh happy hatred, that saves our soul ! and hateful love, that damns it !

It is not sufficient to abstain from hatred ; but we must carry our love of our brother so far, as even to sacrifice our lives for his spiritual good. This in plain terms is the apostle's doctrine, and drawn from the example

example of our Saviour: *Because he hath laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren.* Pastors, in time of plagues, or other epidemical distempers, must not abandon their flocks, but take care of their souls, and supply them with those helps Christ has instituted for their salvation. They must administer the sacraments, comfort the distressed, and apply those spiritual remedies charity suggests, and their circumstances require: the danger of death doth not dispense with the obligation. They lie not only under the precept of charity, but of justice also, and sin grievously, if they neglect their duty in a point so essential: and divines teach, that even seculars are obliged to expose their lives for the salvation of their brother's soul, if they are in imminent danger of perdition, and cannot be rescued, but by such a sacrifice of charity.

Oh the perfection of the Christian religion! Who could preach a doctrine so pure, so sublime, but you, my God, and my Redeemer? Who could persuade the world to embrace a law so disinterested, so contrary to the perverse Inclination of nature, but you? And who is able to fulfill it without your powerful assistance? Give me this help, that I may lay down my life (if necessity requires) not only for thee, but for my brother, for whom thou hast laid down thine. Thy charity has saved me: I, in return, offer my life to save a brother.

To conclude with St. John: *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* Nothing is more ordinary, than love in ceremony, and friendship in expression: And if the heart varied not from the tongue, we might say of the Christians of our age, what the the evangelist writes of those of the first; *They were of one heart, and of one soul,* Acts iv. 32. But this is a mere language of course; a set of words; a love that sits

only on the tongue, and finds no place in the heart; and, consequently, has nothing common with that Christ commands, and St. John repeats in this place. Our love must lodge in the heart, and appear in our practice, by doing our neighbour no harm, and returning good for evil.

O Spirit of love! Give me this divine gift, and remove all resentment, but that of my own failings. Take away envy and ambition, the common sources of misunderstanding and dissension, and let me behold my brother as thy image, all lovely, all amiable.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xiv. Verse

16. *Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:*

17. *And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.*

18. *And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee, have me excused.*

19. *And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.*

20. *And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*

21. *So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servants, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.*

22. *And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.*

23. *And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into*

into the high-ways, and hedges, and compell them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24. *For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS parable opens two scenes: the one of kindness, the other of an unparallel'd ingratitude. *A certain man made a great supper, and invited many;* he had in view no interest, but that of his guests: he was at the trouble, as well as the expence. But, at the time appointed, he found his goodness slighted; and received nothing in return, but excuses. Yet the nobleman's goodness overcame the justice of his resentment. He made a second invitation: *And he sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come:* but they neglected this second civility, and *with one consent began to make excuse.*

Who is this nobleman? God. What is this banquet, but heaven? And who are invited, but the whole race of mankind? Preachers and teachers are the servants that invite, nay, and every pious thought that importunes. Yet we answer God's kindness, as the men in this parable, desiring to be excused.

Nay, we alledge no other motives for our absence. One has purchased a farm, another has bought oxen, a third has married a wife: that is, we are either possessed with a criminal love of terrestrial objects, or plunged into an abyss of impure pleasures, and will not forego these, for the enjoyment of those that are pure, solid, and eternal.

This is the application of one part of the parable, and a sad instance of our stupidity and corruption. Had we no more sight into the other world,

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world, than the poor infidels of America, who have almost nothing of the man but the appearance; did not experience teach us, that all here below is empty and unstable; and faith, that we are made for heaven; I conceive we might confine our thoughts to this world, and make the most of the present. But to believe a paradise, an eternity of pleasure hereafter, and to live as if it were a fable, is strange.

Love not the world, cries out the apostle; 1 John ii. 15. and our Saviour gave the same caution before him. Set not your hearts on the world, nor converse with those that avow its principles. Live in it, as if you were out of it: use its goods as servants; but adore them not as idols. Employ all the benefits of fortune and nature, as wings to fly up to heaven, not as weights to sink you into hell. In a word, in the greatest affluence of temporal advantages, let God's commands be the object of your thoughts and rule of your actions, and persuade yourselves, that one step beyond your duty, carries you beyond your happiness.

These men of fortune and figure refusing the invitation, the master ordered the blind and lame, the poor and feeble, to be brought in to supper. These distressed creatures refused not the invitation. The poor then, O God, and needy enter into heaven, whilst the rich and great men of the world, those we court, those we adore, those we call happy, are excluded! Little greatness, that vanishes into contempt! deceitful happiness, that sinks into misery! God contemns what the world esteems, and prizes what it undervalues: both were invited; the rich send back a refusal; the poor come; the feeble find strength, the lame feet, and the blind eyes, to convey them to heaven. These poor creatures have no pretensions in this world:

world: they feel the utmost of its hatred, and expect no favour, no kindness: this indifference removes those obstacles that withdraw the rich from their duty, and consequently from their happiness; and then the impossibility of bettering their fortune here, and the weight of their present misery, makes them receive with pleasure the proposition of a future felicity.

Complain not then of providence, O poor, who have no other patrimony than the charity of your brethren. You may lay up treasures for the next world, tho' your poverty be extream in this. If you suffer hunger here, you will be satiated there. You will follow God's call without resistance, and leave the world without regret.

Let the sick, blind, and lame accept of their infirmities with resignation, and support them with patience: the misfortunes, you lie under, are real favours sent from God, to force you, as it were, to accept of his invitation. And if he employs a kind of violence, to press you to be happy, where is the harm? Ought you not rather to thank his mercy, than blame his rigour? Reflect on your former conduct; compare it with the present.

When you enjoyed a perfect health, did you desire to be dissolved, with St. Paul, and to be with Christ? When success waited upon your temporal affairs, did you much concern yourselves about those of eternity? Did you open your ears to God's invitations, and your hearts to receive him? Alas! no! you were too easy in this world, to desire a removal, and too busy, even to think of one. But now God has sent forth his ministers, disgraces, disappointments, distempers, to compel you to heaven. Adore his providence; bless his goodness; and thank his

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his mercy. It is better to enter into heaven poor, blind, and lame, than into hell with wealth, grandeur, health, and all the advantages of nature and fortune. It is ordinary for a present misery to end in happiness; but temporal prosperity is seldom followed by eternal joys: I know people may make a good use of prosperity, and a bad one of adversity; but, alas! this is rare; and our Saviour supposes it in the present parable, where he represents the miserable obedient to his call, and those, that enjoy ease and plenty, refractory to his invitation.

And now what is the end of the refusal of some, and the acceptance of others, but that these are admitted to the feast, and those excluded? *But I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* This is a terrible, yet profitable admonition, never to resist God's call, never to reject his kind invitation to repentance. For those who neglect it, when invited, when they solicit, may perchance neither find opportunity to repent, nor a will, when it is most of all their interest.

Not one of those men, that were called, were admitted to the banquet. *None of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.* Why? We know no other reason, but because they refused the first invitation. Shall then all those be excluded heaven, who resist God's grace? Oh! If this be true, who will be saved? What man was ever so upon his guard, as to hear all the invitations that come from God? so fortunate, as to receive them? Alas! Do we not hear his voice every day, and as often contemn it? Do we not answer his solicitations with disobedience, and his kindness with ingratitude? And this is the cause, why many are called, but few

few chosen, Matth. xx. 16. David conjures us not to defer repentance till the morrow, if we are called to day. *To day if ye will hear his voice, barden not your hearts.* Because a delay is dangerous, and an opportunity neglected seldom returns. For, in fine, every call is a favour God bestows upon us, not the payment of a debt: and do we not provoke him by refusing the gift? It is a kind of insult against his person, and a contempt of his kindness: and the ordinary punishment is a withdrawing of his favours, a diminution of his grace. Indeed, he never refuses what is sufficient: yet tho' this gives us the power to repent, it gives not repentance.

Save then my soul, O God, at the expence not only of limb, but life! Strike me with blindness like Tobias, or with a leprosy like Job. He sees enough, who can find the way to heaven; and it is better to fly from a dung-hill into Abraham's bosom, than from a bed of down to fall into hell. Lead me the most troublesome way, if it be the most secure. Heaven cannot cost too much: it is above price; but not above the extent of thy liberality.

I. EPISTLE of St. Peter, Chap. v. Verse

6. *Humble your selves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.*

7. *Casting all your care upon him, for he careteth for you.*

8. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

9. *Whom*

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9. *Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

10. *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

11. *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Peter exhorts all Christians to the practice of humility. This is the darling virtue of our blessed Saviour; the foundation of all others; and therefore the Son of God invites all mankind to imitate his example: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* His whole life indeed was a lesson of morality, says St. Austin, but he proposed his humility for our special imitation.

If you ask, what is humility? St. Bernard will answer, *It is a virtue, whereby a man, out of a most true knowledge of himself, becomes vile in his own eyes.* It consists not therefore in saying we are poor, wretched, and miserable creatures, worthy of contempt, and unworthy of praise, but in reality thinking so. Those expressions may consist with pride, and are often spoken to draw esteem and applause; but an interior acknowledgment of our own baseness, is not subject to illusion.

Nothing helps more to acquire this low opinion of ourselves, than a perfect knowledge of our baseness and indigence: and therefore spiritual men exhort all those, who aim at the acquisition of this virtue, to study their nature, the miseries of their body, and the ungovernable passions

sions of their soul. And when once they have attained a perfect inspection of themselves, they will not be much tempted to entertain towering thoughts of their own excellencies, but rather confess they have nothing great, but humbling infirmities in their bodies, and shameful passions in their souls.

What am I, O Lord? My body is made of the same clay with the vilest insect; my life is short; my pains continual; my beginning is shameful; my end disastrous: the small advantages of beauty, wit and courage are the pure gifts of him, who made me; they are not owing to my deserts. For alas! what right had I to be? and consequently what right to any thing that supposes a being? I am therefore of myself nothing; I have nothing: all I possess, is a meer gratuity of my Creator.

My soul indeed is a spirit, immortal, eternal: it had a beginning, but will never end. It is invested with the glorious qualities of reason and liberty. By these I resemble my Creator, and have on my forehead stamp'd some small beams of his greatness. But alas! this noble part, which should be the glory of our species, is by our pride become the infamy. It is enslaved to passion; always unquiet, always uneasy: it runs from desire to desire; continually craving; never satisfied: it racks us with fears; torments us with hope: it wishes to-day for those things, it feared yesterday; and will again hanker after those very objects, it once trembled at.

But, O! who can express the darkness of our understanding, and the perverseness of our will? That judges by appearances, and, deceived by sense and false lights, leads this away to precipices, from which God only can deliver us. O! How often have we offended his Majesty! How
often

often has his mercy pardoned our offences! How often have we deserved hell! How often has his goodness reprieved us from the punishment! We know we have been sinners, but are uncertain of our repentance; and yet more ignorant, whether we shall expire in grace or in sin.

What man, sure of his crimes, doubtful of his pardon, placed between a hell below, and a heaven above, ignorant which will be his lot, can have the vanity to pride in his greatness? to look big on the brink of such a precipice, and at the sight of so threatening a misfortune? No, no, my God, I see not one motive of pride, but a thousand of humility. My nature persuades me to it, as well as thy commands; and the abuse of all thy favours forces me to confess, that I am a compound of ingratitude and baseness; a proud worm, a vile nothing.

For the practice of this virtue: First, never speak any thing that may tend to your own commendation. If God has furnished you with excellent qualities, receive them with thankfulness; employ them with discretion; expose them not for pomp and applause. The praise of the vulgar is a small reward for a good action; and to labour for the encomium of a man, when you may receive a recompence from God, is a great folly.

Secondly, If you overcome the desire of praise, you will soon master the fear of contempt; at least so far, as to bear it with patience. For whosoever is not ambitious of applause, sets no great value upon the esteem of men: and then it is easy to set as little upon their scorn. Quell then all inordinate conceit of your own worth, and you will not affect a vain reputation: convince yourself, you deserve contempt, and you will support it with patience. You have incurred

curred by your sins the scorn of the saints and angels, and, by want of due repentance, supported it without concern. You may then, with ease, bear that of your neighbour, without complaint.

Thirdly, Carry this noble virtue to the highest pitch; and, like your Master and Saviour, undergo reproaches and infamy with pleasure. He has set you this pattern: he invites you to imitate it: *Learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly in heart.* And although it seems hard, believe the Son of God, rather than fancy and depraved nature, who assures you, *you will find rest to your souls*, Matth. xi. 29. pleasure rather than pain; and, instead of trouble, a sweet calm, and an inexpressible tranquillity.

I know, O Lord, this is unknown language to the world, which can neither give quiet to the soul, nor even understand how a creature can find peace and satisfaction, in a life exposed to contradictions and reproaches; but thy apostle St. Paul confesses, upon his own experience, that humiliation, suffered for thy sake, brings more pleasure than pain: *I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation*, 2 Cor. vii. 4. The sweetness and consolation, he felt in his soul, drown'd all the bitterness, and ungrateful sensation, he should have felt in his body; and he was rather over-set with joy, than sensible of his sufferings.

But St. Peter proposes another motive, to persuade Christians to the practice of humility: *That he may exalt you in due time.* Is it then true, my God, that those, who humble themselves before men, shall be exalted before all thy saints and angels? That they shall receive praise from thy mouth, when the proud shall hear the sentence of damnation? Oh! the punishment of pride! Oh! the recompence of humility!

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At the great day of judgment, when the heavens shall tremble, and the earth shall shake; then shall the humble stand unconcerned; and whilst proud kings and princes call upon mountains to hide them from the face of the angry judge, they shall be exalted, crowned with glory, and conveyed to heaven. Thus are those raised, who debase themselves, and those humbled, who affect insignificant glory. Humble me here, O Lord, to exalt me hereafter; and let me die to myself, to live eternally in thy glory.

The apostle exhorts us also to sobriety and vigilance: *Be sober, be vigilant*; and he adds the reason; *because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*. The devil makes continually his round to surprise us. It is therefore necessary to stand upon our guard; to endeavour to defeat his designs, and to secure our salvation: And for this reason, St. Peter recommends sobriety, as a necessary disposition to vigilance; and this advice he took from these words of his Master: *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life*, Luke xxi. 34. Alas! when intemperance overcharges our stomachs, and wine flies up to the head; when we scarce know what we do; what disposition to vigilance? what thought of danger, and consequently of caution?

Yet the fatal day will come, that must decide my destiny: and if I am surprised in sin, there is no return to God's favour. The apostles, and Christ himself, cry out; Stand upon your guard: be not persuaded into sin, either by the insinuations of the devil, or suggestions of the flesh: or, if you are, be not dissuaded from a sudden and quick repentance, lest death surprise you. How many friends do I see surprised? and if, after all these examples

examples and warnings, I chance to be surpris'd ; what punishment can be too severe for my stupidity ?

We must oppose faith to the temptations of the devil : *Whom resist, stedfast in the faith* : that is, we must reflect that eternal torments are the sad reversion of transitory pleasures, and eternal joys the reward of a generous resistance : that Christ can by his grace give us the victory over all our enemies ; and will, if we desire it with a lively faith, and constant perseverance. These considerations will keep us awake ; will excite vigilance ; discover the devil's snare, the unseasonableness of his promises, and the treachery of his designs : they will animate us to resist, and encourage us to overcome.

In fine, *the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, will make you perfect* : he will try your virtue in the furnace of affliction, purge it of its dross, and, thus refined, reward it in heaven.

Glory and dominion be for ever and ever, to thee, my God, in essence one, but three in persons : to thee, O Father, who created me ; to thee, O Son, who redeemed me ; to thee, O Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xv. Verse

1. *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.*

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

3. *And he spake this parable unto them, saying,*

H 2

4. *What*

4. *What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?*

5. *And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.*

6. *And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoyce with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.*

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

SINNERS came to our Saviour's sermons; and the Pharisees made a part of the audience: but these grave doctors of the law came to criticize, not to learn; to condemn the preacher, not their own sins: *This man receiveth sinners*; how can he be a saint? Nay, he eats at their table, how can he disapprove of their conduct? *And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: He receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

Thus thy enemies, O charitable Jesus, traduced thy zeal, and proclaimed thee a sinner, because thou didst endeavour to withdraw sinners from vice, and to move them to repentance. Let not apostolical men slacken their charity for fear of censure, nor desist from gaining souls, out of the apprehension of false constructions. Envy can cast false colours over the best actions, and misrepresent the most innocent behaviour, as criminal. So long as you converse with sinners out of a principle of zeal, to reduce them to their duty, without danger of deserting yours, where is the harm?
you

you have Christ's conduct for your justification; and the condemnation of the Pharisees, who censured him, falls upon those, who blame yours.

Our Saviour answered their calumny with a question: *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?* They could not return an answer to this query, without condemning their unjust accusation; for our Saviour would shew, under the veil of a parable, that if they are not blameable, who seek a lost sheep, much less was he, for conversing with sinners to reclaim them.

All souls are thine, O God: they are the work of thy hands, and the object of thy love: they are lost in a wilderness of sin to thy grace; lost to their own happiness. Thou hast sent thy only Son to find them; that is, to redeem them from slavery, and to restore them to thy favour, and their own happiness. Pity moved thee to send him, and love engaged him to undertake the employment.

And then, O Redeemer, what has not this painful search cost thee? When a man seeks his lost sheep, his own interest prompts him to undertake the labour. But oh! this could not be your motive. You stand not in need of me. My happiness adds not one grain to yours. What does God lose by my damnation, or gain by my salvation? *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?* Job xxii. 3. Tho' a rebel, you pitied me: tho' ungrateful, you loved me: tho' lost, you took the pains to find me.

My creation cost but one *Fiat*; but my redemption all that flesh is able to suffer, rage to inflict, or even love to invent. You espoused our nature; groaned under the effects of poverty; the heats of summer, and the frosts of winter; you

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travelled through towns and villages, to admonish men of their danger, and to persuade them to seek security in repentance. And when, O Pastor of our souls, this would not induce the lost sheep to return; your charity outstretched its insensibility: you shew'd the wretchedness of its condition by the means you took to redress it; and the excess of your love, by the torments you underwent.

** For the sake of the lost sheep, says St. Austin, the shepherd, in search after it, was torn by Jewish briars.*

For you exposed your honour to reproaches; your body to whips; your head to thorns; your side to the spear; your life to death; so that your prophet had reason to protest in your name, you had exhausted in a manner your power to secure our salvation. *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Isaiah v. 4. Oh! what is man, that thou should'st settle such an excessive affection upon him? Thy angels rebelled against thy commands, and will for ever feel the punishment of their disobedience. Their condemnation followed their sin, nor was a moment granted for repentance; but no sooner was man become criminal, but thou didst resolve to forgive him: and thy love took up his sin to satisfy thy justice. *His ownself bare our sins in his own body.* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

Thus, dear Christians, has God laboured to redeem us; and if his kindness cannot move us to comply with our duty, methinks our own interest should. To act against our interest, is folly; and to be ungrateful, is infamous. Ingratitude is a blemish to human nature; and tho' many are guilty of the fault, few will own it. Have at least as much deference for God, as for men; and refuse not to so great a Majesty, to so unmeasurable a

** Propter ovem perditam, Pastor eam quærens Judaicis vepribus laceratus est. S. Aug.*

Bounty,

Bounty, an acknowledgment, you dare not deny his vassal.

But, O Redeemer, if thy divine eloquence was not able to overcome the Jews; what motives can I propose to convince Christians of thy love, and to bring them over to thy service? nothing can persuade them but thy omnipotent grace; the fruit of all thy labours, and the purchase of thy sacred blood.

This kindness is common to our whole species. But oh! how many engines does his unspeakable goodness set at work, to draw each particular sinner to grace? the beginning of our conversion precedes our free choice: God calls upon us before we can answer: he seeks, before we seek him: Nay, we cannot seek God, unless he first seeks us; nor, come to him, unless he prevents us. This first call, this search, divines call *preventing grace*.

We stray from our duty, like a poor sheep in the wilderness: we entangle ourselves in a labyrinth of disorders; we tire in pursuit of unlawful pleasures. Yet we cannot weary out God's mercy, nor tire his patience. In the midst of our disorders, we hear a voice within us.

How long, O prodigal! wilt thou remain a rebel to thy interest, and a traitor to the best of Fathers, to the most powerful of Masters, to the most severe of Judges? Thy past delights teach thee, the present pleasures will take wing: the world will steal from under thy feet; and, when thou dost think to stand sure, thou wilt find no bottom. But if these kind admonitions make no impression, he unlocks the bottomless pit, uncovers the lake of fire and brimstone, and then puts us this question: *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isaiah xxxiii. 14. can live a prey to everlasting fire?

If this terrible prospect softens not our heart, he strikes us with a disease, stops all passages to pleasure,

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sure, and turns life itself into a burthen: and to break these fools paradises of the world, that cheat our eyes, to enchant our soul, he raises a misunderstanding between us and the world. One misfortune treads on the heels of another: our estate sinks; our projects miscarry; our designs end in smoak, and all our expectations in disappointment. Now we see things in a clear light: all appears vanity, but virtue; all unworthy of our affection, but God. Then he enflames our will with a new grace, which breaks through all opposition; and so we return at last, with a sincere repentance, to the Pastor of our souls.

O dear Jesus! we have strayed like sheep: *seek thy servant*, that he may find thee. It is true, I have shut my ears a hundred times, that I might not hear thee; and as often hardened my heart, that I might not obey thee; so that I deserve no pity, no compassion, no mercy. Had you treated me answerable to my deserts, I had now been groaning under the sentence of your justice; but you desire repentance, not my ruin; and therefore let your grace at last melt my obstinacy into sorrow, and turn my dotage on the world, into a love of heaven.

But when he has regained his lost sheep (a sinner) *he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing; and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends (the saints in heaven and angels) and neighbours, saying to them; rejoyce with me; for I have found my sheep that was lost.* O Father of mercy! why such joy for the conversion of a lost sinner? art thou more rich, because he is found? more happy, because he will be so, if he perseveres? or would'st thou be miserable, if he were unfortunate? no, no, thy joy springs from goodness, not from interest: from thy enemies happiness, not thy own. But if there be so much joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner: methinks there should be some on earth

earth: and if Christ labours so much, we should contribute by our prayers, by our alms, in fine, with all our abilities, to so charitable a work. If alms, which only regard the body, blot out a multitude of sins; how many will these cancel, that are immediately given for the conversion of souls? Oh! did we but understand the real value of a soul, we should be more careful to preserve our own, and contribute less to the damnation of our neighbours.

4th Print.

The EPISTLE to the Rom. Chap. viii. Ver.

18. *For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

19. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

20. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope:*

21. *Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together, until now.*

23. *And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostle encourages the Roman converts, to suffer, with patience and perseverance, the persecutions they lay under, upon consideration of the recompence our Saviour had told his disciples, *should*

should be great; for great is your reward in heaven. Matth. v. 12. But St. Paul adds, that the reward will exceed our sufferings beyond all measure and proportion: *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* * *The pain, says St. Bernard, is drunk by drops; but the reward is a torrent, an impetuous river; a torrent of delight, a river of peace and glory.* The pain is short, and ends with a moment; *transit hora, transit pœna*: but the reward is without change, without end. Say not therefore: Oh! my torment is long, and weighs heavy upon nature. † *No labour is hard that gains heaven; no time is long that purchases a happy eternity.* To see God, and in him all things; what knowledge! to love God, and in him all that is amiable; what pleasure! to enjoy him, and all that is estimable; what riches! to fear nothing; to desire no more for all eternity; what security! what tranquillity! God rewards every one in proportion to his virtues, and measures the recompence to his deserts. Yet, as St. Bernard notes, this measure has no measure, and this proportion, to any thing that is created, has no proportion. Tell me, O God (continues the same saint) what is this thou dost measure? it is nothing I have seen, touch'd, or tasted; yet I am sure, it transcends all that obliges sense, or falls within the compass of my imagination. I can imagine nothing greater, than this majestick pile we call the world. What a harmony, what a discord! what a variety, what a change! and yet a constancy in the change! what a steadfastness in motion! what an immutability in

* *Guttatim pœna bibitur: In remuneratione torrens est voluptatis, et fluminis impetus: Torrens inundans lætitiæ; flumen gloriæ; flumen pacis.* S. Bern.

† *Nullus labor durus videri debet, nullum longum tempus, quo gloria æternitatis acquiritur.* S. Bern.

continual mutations! for an almost insensible part of the globe, what do we not do? nay what do we not suffer? what an eagerness in the pursuit! what transport in the enjoyment! and yet, my God, all this, we so much admire and esteem, is but an entertainment in our banishment. Thou hast prepared it for thy enemies, as well as for thy friends: for those that love vanity, as well as for the followers of truth.

If therefore those things, thou hast made for our contempt, are so pleasing: what will that be, thou hast prepared for our esteem? if the place of our exile has such alluring charms, what shall we enjoy in our own country? All we contemplate here, is but the effect of one *Fiat*: all we enjoy with such transport, only serves to sooth our senses; but in heaven we shall possess thyself; that is, all good: a good, that renders an infinite Being infinitely happy; and that to all eternity.

This glory, my God, hast thou prepared for those that love thee. What comparison then between what I can suffer, and the reward I shall receive? Why then do we repine at a short pain, followed by so long a recompence? Oh! spare me not here, to reward me in heaven.

GOSPEL of St. Luke. Chap. v. Verse

1. *And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth:*

2. *And saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.*

3. *And he entred into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.*

4. *Now*

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4. *Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.*

5. *And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.*

6. *And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake.*

7. *And they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.*

8. *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus, knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

9. *For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:*

10. *And so was also James and John the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*

11. *And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostles had laboured the whole night without success: *Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.* How many upon their death-beds will have reason, with St. Peter, to cry out, *we have taken nothing?* We have laid a thousand designs; undertaken as many enterprizes; we have raised our fortunes; procured honourable posts; made noble alliances; we have compass'd all we aimed at, and aimed at all that flattered our ambition, or pampered sense;

sense: and yet, O God, *we have taken nothing*, nor done any thing to the purpose; because we have spent all our thoughts and time upon the concerns of this life, without any regard to the other.

Where are those pleasures you pursued with such eagerness, and enjoyed with such transport? They are flown away with time, vanish'd in smoak, sunk into nothing. You laboured for riches, without cessation, without intermission: you bought farms, purchased lordships, but where are they? They are made over to an heir, who perchance will not drop one tear upon your coffin, nor let fall one *God be merciful to his soul*. Nothing now remains for you, but despair in your soul, and a grave for your body.

Oh! how true it is, that those, who enslave themselves to the world, find nothing in their hands: they have grasp'd a shadow, and mistook illusion for truth: Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may distinguish substance from appearance; real evils from seeming happiness; and shut my heart against all those specious vanities, that charm my senses to ensnare my soul. They are only colour without, nothing within. All, in short, in this world, besides virtue, is nothing. In the sight of God, a cup of cold water, given in his name, is of more value, than the whole universe, purchased by ambition, and possess'd with vanity.

Although the labour of the night had proved so unsuccessful; yet, at our Saviour's command, the apostles cast once more their nets: *At thy word, I will let down the net*. And what was the event, but a plentiful draught? *They inclosed a great multitude of fishes*. No enterprize succeeds, O God, without thy assistance, tho' never so holy:

holy : none miscarries when undertaken by thy command, and guided by thy grace : human prudence is too short-sighted to promise success, and man too weak to perfect any pious work without the help of grace. *Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it, Psal. cxxvii. 1.* In all your undertakings choose the best measures prudence can suggest ; but then rely upon God's assistance, and invoke it, as if you had done nothing. Without this, you will find yourselves in the apostle's condition : *we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing.* God takes a pleasure to disappoint those, who rely upon their own strength, and to help those, who put all their confidence in his assistance : I will undertake nothing, my Saviour, but in thy name, and for thy honour. I will carry it on with care and circumspection ; but the event I leave to thy providence. Thou dost only command my endeavours : thou art satisfied with my desire, when the action is not in my power ; and dost reward the intention, without blaming the disappointment.

Now, thy conduct is different from that of the world : thy service more easy ; thy rewards more just. How often are care, diligence, and prudence blamed ? How often negligence and temerity applauded ? Infidelity with success receives a recompence, and fidelity without it punishment. But thou, O Lord, dost only regard my heart ; and if I mean well, I shall receive a reward.

The miracle, done in his favour, so astonish'd St. Peter ; that, beside himself, with amazement, he fell down at our Saviour's feet, and desired him to remove farther from so sinful a creature : *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* The acknowledgment of his unworthiness raised

raised the value of the favour, and the goodness of our Saviour; both together cast him into such a fit of humility, and love, that he esteemed himself unworthy of the favour, and even of our Saviour's presence; and therefore he broke out into this expression. *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* But, O dear saint, if you are a sinner, why do you desire his absence, *who taketh away the sins of the world?* Ask him rather to enter, than bid him *depart*: beseech him rather to approach, not to retire. But, Oh! This *depart*, that came from an humble and contrite heart, drew our Saviour nigher; and he, who before only stood before St. Peter's eyes, now entered into his soul. So true it is, what St. Augustin said long ago, that God retires from the proud, and stoops to the humble. *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth,* Psal. cxiii.

5. There is no surer way to obtain the greatest favours of God, than to esteem ourselves unworthy of the least: to preserve our innocence, than humbly to confess ourselves sinners: *I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

The reward of this humility was the choosing them for his disciples. *And having brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.* The obedience of the apostles followed immediately the command of our Saviour: they never ballanced upon the execution, but obeyed his call, as soon as they heard it. They not only abandoned their *little All*, but themselves also to his conduct. *They forsook all, and followed him.* Oh! that we could persuade ourselves, of what importance it is to obey God's call, as soon as we hear his voice. How many would have lived saints, who died in their imperfections?

How

How many would have obtained pardon for their offences, who now despair of mercy? The young man in the gospel desired to follow our Saviour; but he asked leave first to bury his father: the demand seemed reasonable; but however he lost by it the happiness of our Saviour's company, and the dignity of an apostle. The scripture, fathers, reason, and experience, cry out against delay: we acknowledge, and are convinced of the danger; and yet, good God! we act, either as if we resolved never to repent, or had an assurance of repentance. We, who will not trust chance with our most trifling concerns, entrust it with the most important of all, even those on which depends a happy eternity.

O what folly! what madness! No: if I am called to day, I will not put off the execution till to-morrow. Now grace is offered, and time; perchance afterwards both may be denied. Why therefore shall I sleep upon an uncertainty, when I may put my salvation in security? The apostles left their nets, to obey thy call, O God! I am tied to the world by nets: transitory pleasures, ensnare me; ill habits entangle me: break these threads, or rather cables, that I may fly to thee, obey thy voice, and fulfil thy commands.

But, like these disciples, at Christ's call, must we abandon all to follow him? We must withdraw our hearts from an unlawful love of the world, and even from our possessions also, when we cannot keep them without a crime. For it is to renounce God himself, not to abandon what he commands: and does he not command us to renounce father and mother, nay, and our own lives, if they cannot be preserved without a crime? All things, even the most dear, must be abandoned, if they draw us into sin. Pleasure and interest must yield to his friendship; and

and if they sway more with us than our duty, we must repent here, or severely smart for it hereafter.

If we cannot quit the state we are in, we must ask pardon for our temerity, and implore his mercy for having cast ourselves into a state against his will. We must incessantly implore his grace, that we may either avoid, or overcome the obstacles, that interpose between us and heaven: we must consult the wise, and follow the best methods, prudence shall prescribe, to fly temptation. We must live in a separation from pleasure, and in the exercise of virtue.

Place me, O God in the state thy providence has designed; not where the passions of temerity and precipitation hurry me. If I leave my destiny in your hands, I am secure; but in danger, if I withdraw from thy providence, and turn my own carver. Into thy hands I abandon myself, my God, and give myself up wholly to thy care. Speak, and I will answer; *Here I am, ready to obey thy call.*

5 P. 114.

I. EPISTLE of St. Peter, Chap. iii. Ver.

8. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

9. *Not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*

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11. *Let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

12. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

13. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

14. *But and if ye suffer for righteousness-sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.*

15. *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostle sets down a catalogue of virtues, and desires the Christians to practise them. He speaks not here to the clergy alone, but to the whole church: and recommends not these virtues, as an ornament, but as an obligation.

First, *Be ye all of one mind*: raise no unprofitable disputes; tho' they begin without any ill design, they are seldom managed without heat, and often end in rancour and aversion. Conform your judgment, as much as reason will permit, to your brother's; and when you cannot, rather let the question fall, than contend, especially if the thing be of small concern: for it is better he should remain in an innocent error, than both should fall into a real sin. But if you judge it convenient to disabuse him, propose your reasons with calmness, to discover truth, not to overcome. Press him not home with eagerness: this will rather heat his passion, than convince his judgment, and violate charity, than

than reclaim him from an error. Some seem to discourse, merely to oppose: they criticize upon every word, and rack the most clear expressions, to reprehend them. This is against the rules of civility, as well as of christianity; and a fault against breeding, no less than a sin against charity.

Secondly, *Be compassionate*: compassion is a virtue, that not only moves us to assist our neighbour in his necessity, but even to partake of his afflictions. Thus St. Paul commands, to *weep with those that weep*: and he had such a concern for his converts, that he shared in their mis-carriages: he deplored their sins as his own: *Who is offended, and I burn not*, 2 Cor. xi. 29. He was sensible of their weakness, and concerned at their infidelities. We are all members (as the same apostle says) of the same body, and, as when one is out of order, all the others are discomposed; so charity obliges us to sympathize with the members of the mystical body, as nature does with all the members of a natural. This is to follow the doctrine Christ taught, and the primitive Christians practised to a scruple; *They were of one heart, and one soul*, Acts iv. 32. But those happy times are past, and we have reversed their practice, and rather grieve when our brother rejoices, and rejoice when he grieves. We often add insult to affliction, and encrease his misery by reproaches and calumny, instead of easing him by consolation. Thus we profane the best religion by a heathen practice; and frame our lives rather by what it forbids, than by what it commands.

O Jesus! The foresight of the ruin of an ungrateful city drew sighs from thy compassionate heart, and tears from thy sacred eyes. Thou didst weep for her sins, because she would not

lament her own, and wert sensible of her disaster, whilst she laugh'd at thy menaces. Mollify my hard heart, and teach it to pity, at least, my neighbour's misfortunes, which it can neither avert nor heal. Give me the charity to assist those, I am able, with my means ; and those I cannot, with compassion.

And to encourage more earnestly Christians to practise these virtues, and to deter them from sin, he assures them: *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous ; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* Over those, to hear their prayers, to comfort, and assist them : and therefore they must not despond, nor sink under the greatest pressures, but bear up against them, with assurance, that God sees their necessities, and will, in convenient time, either redress them, or give them the courage to support them with patience.

But let not the wicked imagine God sees not their disorders ; because he does not punish them : *The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* And he will find a time to revenge his honour, and their infidelities. If he stops his hand, it is to expect repentance : and if he spares them here, they will smart hereafter. The continual prosperity in this world of evil men, is a severe punishment, because it forebodes everlasting torments in the other.

I lift up my eyes to thee, O God, cast down thine upon me ! but with the favourable regard of mercy, not of indignation ; to chastise me as a father, not to condemn me as a judge.

Nay, the apostle not only assures the virtuous of God's special protection, but also that they shall receive no evil from men. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good.* No man persecutes another, but upon

upon appearance of some injury received: it is uncommon, and unnatural, to do ill without provocation: who will speak ill of him, who speaks well of all? do him an injury, who studies to do good; whose carriage is civil, whose actions are innocent, and all his proceedings inoffensive? Virtue draws respect, as well as esteem, from the barefac'd sinners: it awes impudence, and disarms malice itself; so that those, who have a mind to affront the good, often want courage, and seldom find an occasion: and thus virtue entitles them to God's peculiar protection and assistance; and at the same time, is a defence against the insults of wicked men.

But tho' they should, without cause, or colour, molest you: *Fear ye not.* Forgive their sin, and pity their malice. The harm falls upon themselves, they intend for you: they incur the guilt of a sin; and you gain the reward of a virtue. And thus, *you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*, by a true love, by an exact conformity of your lives to his maxims.

If you are my protector, O God, whom need I fear? If you assist me, what difficulty cannot I overcome? Men assault me in vain, if you defend me: nay, the devils themselves cannot conquer me, unless I will be overcome. Nothing is a real evil but sin. Keep me innocent, and I fear no affliction: Give me thyself, and I desire nothing besides: and, oh! what can I desire, but God? And where can I find any comfort, but in the enjoyment of thee.

GOSPEL of St. Matth, Chap. v. Verse

20. *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

21. *Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.*

22. *But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the counsel: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.*

23. *Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*

24. *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR Saviour excites his disciples to virtue, and tells them that unless their sanctity be more sound and sincere, than that of the Pharisees, they will not be saved: *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees; ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Though the exterior of those leaders was grave and edifying, pride and hypocrisy lay within: they corrupted their law with false glosses, and abandoned God's commands to follow their own fancies; and thus, at once, they erred against faith and morality.

In the first place, they turned piety into hypocrisy. Our Saviour often taxed them with this vice;

vice; *Wo unto you hypocrites.* They prayed, fasted, and gave large alms; but pride was the motive of these actions, not self-denial or charity. They mortified their bodies, to procure esteem; and assisted their necessitous brethren out of ostentation. These actions, performed out of so base a motive, will not entitle us to a reward in the next world, but to a punishment. Your righteousness then must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees: you must raise your intention above all temporal views, and expect the reward from God, without courting the applause of men. Oh! the folly of those, who practise humility out of a principle of pride: who enrich the poor, to please their vanity, and undergo all the pain of fasting and mortification, for an empty esteem here, and real punishments hereafter! If you will take pains, make the most of your labour: curb your passions: relieve the poor: mortify the flesh for God's sake; and give, at least, as much for the joys of heaven, as an hypocrite offers for the torments of hell.

It is certain nothing can be more unreasonable, and at the same time more irksome, than the conduct of an hypocrite: nothing more uncertain than the esteem he affects: nothing more contemptible, though he procures it. To labour as much for vice, as for the purchase of virtue, is irrational: to be continually under a restraint, is difficult. The interior will appear in spight of all endeavours to conceal it; and then the affected praise will end in execration: for hypocrisy is not only abominable in the sight of God, but in that of men; and even those, who are guilty of it themselves, are the first to dispraise it in others.

Let not therefore your righteousness, that is, your piety, resemble that of the Pharisees, which was nothing but ostentation and hypocrisy. Abstain not from doing good out of a fear of pride,

nor do a good action out of a motive of vanity. Do not ill, out of an apprehension of being thought virtuous: leave people's opinion to themselves, and let your only care be to please God: wish that he alone saw your good works; and yet cease not by your life to edify your neighbour. Both are commanded: we must, as much as prudence will permit, conceal our virtues, and yet expose them to the eyes of the world, that the spectators may glorify God, to whom they are owing: *Let your light so shine before men*, says our blessed Saviour, *that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven*, Matth. v. 16.

O my Redeemer! I implore thy grace, that I may be pleasing in thy eyes by doing what thou dost command, and in the manner thou dost prescribe. I will never omit any part of my duty to avoid censure, nor comply with it, to be praised by men. Their blame will not hurt me, if I do well; nor their praise avail me, if I do ill. If I am grateful in thy sight, the disesteem of all creatures can never make me miserable; if displeasing, their esteem will not make me happy.

Secondly, the Scribes and the Pharisees taught, that the precept, *Thou shalt not kill*, laid no prohibition upon our thoughts and desires. So that if their hands were not stained with blood, though their heart was defiled with wicked desires, they supposed themselves innocent; but our Saviour declares, it is not sufficient to abstain from ill actions, but also from bad desires; that it is a sin to desire a neighbour's death, as well as to procure it; to covet his wife, as well as to abuse her. With reason therefore did he declare; that *if our righteousness exceed not that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*; that is, unless our hearts be clean of revenge, as well as our hands, and of all ill desires, as well as of sin-
ful

ful actions. Our Saviour therefore commands, in this place, to conform the interior motions of the soul, to exterior observance of his law; to do good out of a supernatural motive; and to stand clear, not only of sinful acts, but also of desires: and therefore it is not only a sin to procure a considerable damage to our neighbour, but even to desire one; nay, and to rejoyce at his misfortune. Oh! how often have I fallen into these interior sins without scruple! I supposed myself innocent, so long as I broke not out into overt-acts against thy laws, O God! whilst in the mean time, I gave full range to my thoughts, and no check to my desires. How often have I envied my neighbour's prosperity, and triumph'd at his misfortunes? how often have I taken a criminal complacency in those sins, I had not the impudence to commit? and thus have forfeited thy grace for a pleasure only in my imagination. Thou, O Lord, who dost number my hairs, dost alone keep a register of these crimes; to pardon them, if I fly to thy mercy by repentance; to punish them, if I remain obstinate. I implore thy mercy, detest my folly, and confide in thy goodness. But why does our Saviour forbid so severely, not only murder, but even interior motions of anger? *But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council.* He forbids the least offences, because thy are sins; and though small, yet easily, and insensibly they draw us into greater. When passions grow warm, they immediately take fire, and carry us to the greatest disorders. How often has one cast of the eye raised impure thoughts in the mind, which conversation has improved to the ruin of our souls! a word, spoken without design, raises misunderstandings, quarrels, and disputes

putes, which end in aversion and hatred. An innocent laughter proves often the source of railing and detraction, and a neglect of one point of our duty, often draws after it an omission of all the others. We must then pull up vice by the very roots; lest, by growing upon us, it destroy the charity we owe our neighbour, and the compliance with all those duties, we owe God.

Thanks, O Saviour, for thy charity in teaching us a doctrine little understood, and practised less; yet necessary for all those, who intend to square their lives by thy commands. Alas! small defects are esteemed by deluded mortals heroick virtues; and blindness canonizes those for saints, who are downright sinners. They never reflect, they expose themselves to great sins by committing with deliberation little ones: and that, if they give their passions a small liberty, they will soon take a greater. It is easy standing, if we keep off a precipice; but if we draw too near, one slip carries us to the bottom.

But if perchance we have injured our brother, how must we make satisfaction? Our Saviour tells us in the following words: *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first to be reconciled to thy brother.* We must, out of hand, employ all means possible to compose the difference, and to procure a reconciliation. If, in your prayers, you remember an offence against charity; interrupt your devotion; and immediately ask pardon. Prayers, that come from a rankled heart, are ungrateful to God. We must forgive our brother's offences, before God forgives ours, and be reconciled to him, if we intend a reconciliation with our Maker. You must lay aside all rancour, and not only abstain from doing, but even wishing him any harm: nay you must go farther, and resolve to do him all the good turns, your circumstances will

will permit, and his necessity requires: for our Saviour not only forbids us to do evil, but commands us to do good.

Is it necessary not only to forgive, but also to ask pardon? Sometimes it is: *viz.* when other means are ineffectual; and especially, when we are the delinquents: and if publick infamy follow the injury we have done him, the satisfaction must be publick also, and reach as far as the affront. But if with good reason we suspect, that asking pardon will rather increase the misunderstanding, than appease it, it is certain there is no obligation: and this is too too often the case. When men have been some time at variance, it is not always safe to bring them together; the presence of an enemy raises the passions, which time and absence allay; and so the endeavour to close up one breach, only serves to widen another. They examine each other's behaviour; criticize upon words; wrest expressions; and, whilst the one fears to submit too much, the other pretends he submits too little; and thus, upon a punctilio, arise new disputes, which often end in the old hatred and aversion. Follow therefore the rules of charity and prudence in asking pardon: sometimes you are obliged; sometimes you are not; but always you must inwardly forgive. This is your indispensable duty. No prayers, no tears, no sacrifice, are acceptable without it. Unless we pardon our brother's offences, God will not forgive ours.

O foolish man! why so many scruples to forgive your brother the debt of one penny, when you stand indebted to God a million? and yet you must lie in prison, till you have paid the last farthing of this vast sum, unless you quit scores with your brother. Should not, in this case, self-interest over-power resentment? But alas! we, who are wise in our temporal concerns, are fools in the manage:

management of those of eternity, and transgress all the principles, not only of prudence, but of reason.

You, O dear Saviour, did not stand upon formalities, when you sued your eternal Father to pardon me: you not only interposed your prayers, but offered your sacred Body, not only to torments, but to death. You thought it not against the Majesty of your Person to assume my nature, and to plead for me in this humble (and, if I may say) degrading posture: and yet I was the offender, not you: nay a rebel against you, and your heavenly Father. Yet my wickedness put no stop to your goodness. The very enormity of my sins moved you to procure their pardon. Far therefore be it from me, who profess the religion you taught, not to follow your example. Here in your divine presence, and that of your angels, I forgive all the world; and ask the forgiveness of my sins only with this proviso, that I forgive all offences, and pardon all injuries whatsoever. Nor will I fail to crave forgiveness of those I have offended. Neither my innate pride shall hinder me, nor fear of infamy fright me, from this submission. But, alas! is it infamous to obey your commands, and to comply with my duty? is it honourable to profess your doctrine, and shameful to follow your example? no, no: these deter us from the practice of charity, so useful to society, so necessary for our salvation.

The EPISTLE of the Rom. Chap. vi. Verse

3. *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?*

4. *Therefore*

4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7. For he that is dead, is freed from sin.

8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

HERE the apostle exhorts the Roman converts, after their baptism, to leave their sins in the font, and to walk in the way of virtue; because there, we died to *those*, and rose again to *this*; for we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the death by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. St. Paul means, that baptism represents the death and burial of our Saviour. *We have been buried with him in baptism, to die unto sin.* And therefore, as he entered dead into his sepulchre, and arose from it alive; so man enters dead, that is, a sinner, into the baptismal font; but returns just, and heir to heaven: and

and for this reason, baptism imposes an obligation to lead a new life: it makes us Christians, members of Christ's mystical Body, and consequently subject to the observance of all those duties, he has taught us in his gospels, and left us by his example. For a Christian is a man, who not only makes profession to follow the doctrine and example of Christ, but also who is so obliged, upon the fundamental principles of his religion. This he promises at his admittance into the church, and on this condition he is received into the society of the faithful. It is therefore our duty to act as he did; and to suffer as he suffered: what he embraced, must be the object of our love; what he condemned, of our aversion. We must have the same designs; act with the same intention; die to ourselves; and only live to God, and for him: *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death; we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;* that is, if we die like him, we must rise as he did, and by consequence lead a new life, conformable to his.

Oh! that Christians would but look back upon their baptism, reflect upon what they promised, and seriously compare their lives with their obligation. Oh! what a difference would they find between their duty, and their actions: between what they promise, and what they perform. Jesus was so far from seeking honour and applause, that he would never receive either, but when the glory of his heavenly Father required his acceptance. For this reason, he often commanded silence to those he cured, and forbid his apostles to publish his glorious transfiguration. Are we so disengaged from the temptation of esteem, as never to desire it, much less to seek it, unless God's honour interposes? Oh, no! we are made up of pride and arrogance: we court it almost in our actions. Our very virtues are often tainted with vanity, and, what is strange, sometimes

times our very vices. Oh! what a folly, my God! that I, who deserve contempt, should so fondly affect esteem, when thou, who art my Redeemer, and rule of my actions, so earnestly dost avoid it.

He rejoiced to be despised as the very outcast of men: he had no resentment against his persecutors, but of pity and compassion? he comforted some; healed others; loved them all: and never reveng'd one injury, although he received a thousand. Is there any resemblance in this point, my God, between thy conduct, and mine? I am forc'd, to my confusion, to confess there is no similitude, no proportion; nay, that my behaviour runs quite counter to thine, and consequently to my obligation! how often does an innocent word raise my indignation, and blow it into a flame? One cold look makes me forget a hundred favours, and rather prompts me to revenge an oversight, than to return thanks for a kindness. If I am blamed without cause, I exclaim against the injustice of the calumny, and, by retaliation, not only lose my patience, but my innocence. Yet I pretend to be thy disciple; to frame my life by thine; to die to sin; to live to virtue. Oh infidelity! who would suffer it, but an infinite goodness? who would pardon it, but an infinite mercy?

He deprived himself of all, not only pleasures, but even conveniences of life. Poverty waited upon him into the world; accompanied him three and thirty years; ascended with him unto the cross; and followed him into the grave. Why, then, my soul, dost thou hanker after this world, as if it were thy place of dwelling, not of banishment? why dost thou manage all thy concerns of time, as if thou hadst no pretension to eternity? thy Saviour was King of the universe, yet possessed nothing: he had the dominion of all things, yet denied himself the use of any. Poverty was his wealth; labour

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bour his ease; and suffering his pleasure. He has not, it is true, dealt so severely with thee, as with himself: he knows thy weakness, and is indulgent to thy infirmities. Though he forbids unlawful pleasures, he allows those that are innocent. Use his creatures, as means to lead thee to him, not as retractsives to withdraw thee from him. Contemn what thou dost not enjoy, and model all thy pleasures, all thy diversions, all thy desires, by the rule of reason and of his gospel, not of sensuality and nature.

Here is room enough to lead a pleasant life, and yet a virtuous one also. But I have not been content with these bounds, nor easy under this yoke. This I have thrown off; those I have step'd over; and have taken the liberty to become a slave to my passions, and, what is worse, to my mortal enemy. I groan, my God, under the weight of my chains, and am weary of my servitude. I am persuaded, by my sad experience, that it is more easy to overcome sensuality, than to obey it; that there is no content, but in a blind obedience to thy commands; no way to heaven, but that thou hast mark'd out by thy example.

He always made his heavenly Father's will the sole rule of his practice: he submitted to his orders without dispute, without reluctance. *Thy will be done; not as I will, but as thou wilt*; Matth. xxvi. 39. was the result of his prayers, and the motive of his actions: his painful life, his cruel and approbrious death, were the effects of this submission. He embraced both with joy, because it was his Father's pleasure. It is our duty to resemble Christ in this conformity of our wills to that of God's, if we desire to resemble him in his glory. It is hard; but necessary: and as it is the duty of a Christian, so it is the top of his perfection. If we hate only what he hates, and love what

what he commands, we shall not only be exempt from sin, but enriched with the whole train of virtues. Nothing will come amiss. Adversity will be as welcome as prosperity, sufferings as ease; and we shall be as cheerful in sickness, as in health. We shall enjoy whatever we desire, because we desire nothing, but what God's paternal providence assigns us. O! what a life will so disinterested a Christian lead! what a calm will he enjoy from without! what a paradise within! he neither fears those disasters, at which men are generally alarmed, nor can any of the misfortunes, with which this life is usually attended, discompose the serenity of his mind: no doubt, as this conformity is a great virtue, so the practice is difficult; but to attain a low degree, we must aim at the highest; for the execution never comes up to our designs.

This is the obligation of all Christians: but has our behaviour answered it? alas! not in the least. My conscience, I am sure, accuses me not only of a neglect, but even of a total oblivion of this important duty. How often have I spurned at Providence for crossing my designs, tho' criminal; and looked upon its kindnesses as injuries? Crosses tired my patience, and suffering cast me into complaints and murmurs. In fine, I confess, O God, my life is a series of disobedience to thy will, and of compliance with all my perverse inclinations; and tho' my profession enjoins me to imitate my Saviour in all things, I have not followed him in one: and yet, *we shall also live with Christ*, on this condition alone, *if we be dead with Christ*; dead to sin, to the world, to ourselves, and our own will. I have indeed made some vain efforts, which ended rather in wishes that I were perfect, than resolutions to be so. They were made, and broke, almost the same moment; and yet I was rather proud to have made them,

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than solicitous to keep them. Thus I pass'd my days in a fatal lethargy, without any sense of my duty. But oh! had I really been in a continual slumber! if I had done no good, at least I had been guilty of no evil. But, alas! I was awake in my sleep: awake to my ease; awake to my passions; awake to all my temporal concerns: and asleep only to those of eternity. But thy apostle's call, *Arise, thou that sleepest*, Eph. v. 14, has dispelled the drouzy humour, and the assurance he gives me, that thou wilt enlighten my soul, makes me hope thou wilt also influence my will with thy grace, and subject it totally to thine.

GOSPEL of St. Mark, Chap. viii. Verse

1. *In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,*

2. *I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:*

3. *And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.*

4. *And his disciples answered him, from whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?*

5. *And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? and they said, Seven.*

6. *And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them: and they did set them before the people.*

7. *And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.*

8. *So*

8. *So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets.*

9. *And they that had eaten were about four thousand; and he sent them away.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

HERE we find a multitude following Jesus, who, taken up with the desire of hearing his divine exhortations, forgot their bodily necessities; yet Christ took care of the bodies, tho' they, out of zeal, neglected them. And they, who came a-far off, seemed to move him to compassion: *For divers of them came from far.* The holy fathers, and interpreters, say, these people represent great sinners, who, by a sincere repentance, return to God. These *come indeed from far*; as far as the state of sin is removed from that of grace; and consequently as hell from heaven. For these Christ is solicitous, and works a miracle, to sustain their weakness: he prepares a banquet, to restore their strength; *Lest they faint in the way.* Lest weary in the course of virtue, they have begun, they return to that of vice, they have left, or at least sit down, and begin to repent of their very repentance, and to wish they had too little courage to undertake a reformation of life, or more strength to go through with it. Let them therefore not despond, tho' they find, at the beginning of their conversion, great difficulty to persevere. The devil will, no doubt, endeavour to regain them, and employ all the charms of the world, all the natural inclinations of flesh and blood, to withdraw them from the service of God, into which they are newly entered. They must shake off ill habits, heightened by custom, and almost blended with their very nature by length of time and practice. They must take a new course, quite opposite to the

former; hate what they loved, and love those very objects they hated. Such a total change cannot be made without great violence, nor continued without a greater; and they will certainly *faint in the way*, unless Christ supports them, and enspirits their feeble nature with fresh supplies of his grace. But oh! the tenderness of our Redeemer! *I have compassion on the multitude*: He embraces all mankind with the tenderness of a father; and seems to shew a more particular kindness for penitents. This he has express'd in a hundred places of holy scripture, and he seems to have wrought the present miracle in favour of those, who came from far; that is, who represent sincere converts.

Fear not then, O happy souls, who are returned, from the slavery of sin, to the liberty of grace: from the bondage of the devil, to the service of Christ. Fear not, I say, neither the weakness of nature, nor the force of temptation. Christ will fortify that, *that you faint not in the way*; or temper the violence of *this*, that you may not be overcome. In all your combats, you have Christ as a second, to assist you; and as a spectator, to applaud your courage, and to crown it with victory, and glory.

Never reflect how long this state of violence will last. Such thoughts raise despondence, and only serve to make you think perseverance impossible; which with grace is easy. Our lives are composed of days, and, if you pass each day in virtue, your whole life will be virtuous. Think not, then, of to-morrow, nor fright yourself with this question: how can I live under a perpetual constraint twenty or thirty years? I am in the flower of my age, and in all probability, have more time to come than what is past.

These suggestions the devil lays before us, to raise in us apprehensions that perseverance is impossible. But, in the first place, reckon not upon many

many years, tho' you are young: remember, death preys upon youth, as well as upon old-age; and that it's no good inference; *many years are to come, because few are past.* Resolve to live well this day, and think not of to-morrow. When the morrow is come, say to yourself: *Yesterday, with God's assistance, I complied with my duty: why not to-day?* The difficulties are not greater, nor God's assistance less. Thus did the saints by this pious stratagem deceive nature; which looks upon a restraint, not only as insupportable, but almost as impossible: and by practising christian perfection every day, they consecrated all their life to virtue: without *fainting in their way*, without relenting in the happy course begun, they crowned their piety with a more happy perseverance.

O Pastor of my soul! suffer me not to faint in the way of thy service. I am one of those, whom thy goodness has called from far. Let thy compassion move thee to fortify the weakness of my soul, as it did to refresh the bodies of the multitude in the desert. In spite of all my resolutions to remain thy servant, I find a strange propensity within me to abandon thee. Nature revolts; pleasures allure, and difficulties fright me. Nothing can keep me constant to my good purposes, but thy grace, that persuaded me to make them.

If we examine the conduct of this multitude, according to the rules of human prudence, their piety carried them too far; for they remained three days fasting, and the wilderness could afford no provisions; so that nothing but a miracle could sustain them: but a true love of God, a sincere concern for the good of their souls, makes saints forget all care of their bodies; and this neglect is supplied by God's paternal providence, who seldom fails to manage our temporal interest, when we give all our thoughts to the improvement of his. When

we seek only his glory, he labours for our profit; and not only furnishes us with supernatural blessings, but temporal happiness also; *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*, Matth. vi. 33.

But as a fervent zeal for the glory of God makes us presume too much on our strength, so self-love exaggerates our weakness. Those undertake things above their strength, and chuse rather to be indiscreet than to be less zealous; but these, under a pretext of discretion, foolishly pretend their constitution is unable to bear any austerity, and thus they exempt themselves from the performance of their duty, and lay those defects on impotence, that are solely owing to lukewarmness. Few, in our age, seem guilty of the multitude's indiscretion (if it may be called one) but many of too excessive a love of their health; or at least they cover their indecision, and even greater sins, with this pretext, and transgress the commandments of God, and all the precepts of his church, because they cannot observe them without inconvenience. Some cannot fast, nor others pray. Abstinence agrees not with the constitution of *those*, nor application with the indisposition of *these*. But in reality, the cause of these neglects lies not in the body, but the mind: we will not check appetite, nor force nature with the least constraint.

O! let my fervour carry my mortification beyond the bounds of discretion, rather than self-love withhold me from my duty. If I can fast for a wordly interest, why not for an eternal? does the hope of a transitory reward deaden all the weakning impressions of hunger; and the expectation of a never ending recompence enliven them? or if I dare expose my life, and health, for a sensible satisfaction; why shall I not hazard it for virtue? is that so valuable, or this so contemptible! Oh my soul!

soul! stop thy ears to the murmurs of nature, and follow the voice of grace. *This* cannot mislead you; *That* may; and out of a fear of doing too much for God, you do nothing.

The apostles thought it impossible to nourish such a multitude in the desert: *Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?* They had only seven loaves, and a few fishes: a small pittance for four thousand. But they considered not the power of their Master, who was as able to multiply the loaves as to draw the universe from nothing. O! how happy are we, who have so powerful a Protector to defend us! so compassionate a Father to assist us! his omnipotence assures me, he can protect me against all the strength of wicked men, and malicious devils; and his goodness gives me a confidence he will. Let nothing therefore deter thee, my soul, from his service; neither dangers, tribulations, persecutions, nor even death: He will either avert these, or supply me with strength to overcome them. Tho' I am able to do nothing of myself, with his help all things are possible.

They did eat and were filled. All that the world can either promise or give, rather sharpen the appetite, than satisfy it. They may give us a surfeit, but not satiety. Thy gifts, O Lord, alone can satiate a reasonable soul. We are made for thee: Thou wilt truly content us in the other world, and virtue alone can satisfy us in this. If therefore we desire to lead a happy life here, let us be truly virtuous. The only content, we can find here, is a firm confidence, we shall be placed among the blessed hereafter; and this is founded upon God's favourable assistance, and, on our part, on a pious co-operation with his grace; for, without this, we do not confide, but sinfully presume.

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When the multitude was satiated, the apostles took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full. Thy favours, O Lord, are precious; and we must manage the least of them with care and solicitude. Yet why do I say *the least*? no grace is little: it is the price of thy blood, and consequently of an infinite value: it is the seed of eternity; the cause efficient of virtue, and of a thousand graces, which thou hast even press'd upon me; but on which my salvation depends, I know not. Seeing therefore I am ignorant on which; Oh! let me manage them all to thy glory, and my profit. Let not the least fragment pass my notice, nor slip by unregarded; much less fall upon the ground, out of disrespect or negligence.

EPISTLE to the Rom. Chap. vi. Verse

19. *I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for, as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity, unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.*

20. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

21. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

22. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

23. *For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of Gods is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul does not, at the first, persuade the Romans to embrace the highest perfection, the christian religion prescribes; but, having regard to their weakness; *I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh.* He exhorts them to apply themselves as seriously to virtue, as, under idolatry, they did to vice; and to consecrate those members to righteousness, they had defiled with sin: *As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, so now yield your members servants to righteousness.*

Is it possible, O God, that thou wilt be content to be served with the same application, we serve the flesh, and even thy mortal enemy, and our own, the devil? All we have is thine: to thee we owe life and being. Thou hast created the world for our use, and ourselves to possess thy glory. Without thy assistance, we cannot move one step. If thou withdrawest thy hand, we fall into our primitive nothing. When, by disobedience, I fell into thy displeasure, thou didst not revenge my ingratitude, but didst sacrifice thy innocent Son, to expiate my crime. But alas! what obligation have I to flesh or the devil? The one draws me to pleasure, the other to sin, and both conspire my damnation. They therefore deserve aversion, not service; and I am obliged, by all that's dear, to disobey their commands; to refuse their favours; to repress their suggestions, which design my ruin under the colour of happiness. But I am wholly thine, O God, and therefore thou dost deserve every action of my body, every motion of my soul. I should not think but of my baseness, and thy perfection; of thy goodness, and my ingratitude; nor even love myself, but for thee. Yet oh! did I but serve thee with
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the same fidelity I have served the world ; were I as obedient to thy commands, as I have been to those of the flesh ; and as ready to follow thy holy inspirations, as the temptations of the devil ; how happy should I be, notwithstanding my past irregularities ! From this instant, I detest my past behaviour, and resolve to amend it. Those members, that have served to sin, by mortification and penance, shall be consecrated to my sanctification, and every action shall be directed to God's honour and my salvation.

To persuade the Romans more effectually to the observance of Christ's law, and to a total change of manners, St. Paul asks them *what fruit they had in those things, whereof they are now ashamed?* Oh ! did christians propose to themselves daily this question : *What fruit had you in those things, whereof you are now ashamed?* I have spent all my thoughts and time upon things, that either flattered my vanity, or my sensuality. Interest carried me beyond the bounds of justice ; and pleasure beyond those of decency, and even nature. My actions have been as lawless as my desires ; and these have coveted all, my imagination has represented, either pleasing to sense, or agreeable to nature. *What fruit had I then in those things?* Disappointment in my enterprizes, chagrin in my misfortunes, and shame in my enjoyments ; and at present, diseases in my body ; remorse in my soul. This is the only *fruit* I have reaped of my former life ; and without repentance, hell in the future : *For the end of those things is death.* Temporal death puts an end to sinful enjoyments ; and an eternal death begins their punishment.

Nor is this question profitable only to those, who have absolutely transgress'd the essential points of their duty ; but even to those, who have rather idled, than sinned away their time, in childish amuse-

amusements: *What fruit therefore had you in those things?* I pleas'd my fancy; enjoy'd my ease; and liv'd without constraint in indolence and unconcern. Whilst I might have heap'd up treasures for the next life, I have sauntered away *this*. For tho' I have been always busy, I have really done nothing; because it is nothing in the sight of God, that tends not to his glory and my salvation.

Oh! how foolish are we with all our reason! how indiscreet, with all our wisdom! what avails it, to reason well, unless we live well? To take just measures in the management of our temporal concerns, if we overlook those that are eternal? All worldly wisdom in the sight of God and his angels is downright folly; it is vain, empty, and insignificant.

What then will become of me, O God, who have not only neglected to lay in provisions of good works for heaven, but have heap'd up a number of bad works, for fuel to burn my crimes in hell? If I abide by thy justice, I am lost: my hope relies only on thy mercy: *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*: I will, from my past miscarriages, be more cautious for the future; I will correct my lukewarmness by a new fervour, and cancel my sins by a sincere repentance.

But if the only fruit of sin be shame and remorse; that of virtue is content here, and glory hereafter; *But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God; ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.* Piety has this advantage; that, even in this world, it is honourable and glorious. The worst of men esteem it, tho' they will not take the pains to purchase it: It is waited on by joy, by a calmness and quiet of conscience, and is followed by life everlasting. Oh! how different are the fruits of virtue from

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from those of vice! That brings forth confidence; This shame. That joy; This repentance. That repose of conscience; This remorse. That, in fine, ends in glory; This in torments: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.*

What man in his wits will prefer sin, with all its present charms, together with a reversion of eternal misery, before virtue (tho' the practice be hard) with eternal happiness. O! could we but dive into this eternity, and survey the joys and punishments of the next life! what a change of manners should we see in this? To suffer eternally, for a pleasure as vain, as short; for a pleasure, that began one moment, and ended the next; (*The wages of sin is death;*) what madness! to undergo a small restraint, a short mortification of sense, for a life as happy, as it is everlasting! (*The gift of God is eternal life;*) what wisdom! Both these lie before thee. Thou may'st chuse either. Practise virtue, and thou wilt live eternally; but if thou fallest into sin, without repentance, thou diest eternally: *For the wages of sin is death.*

GOSPEL of St. Matthew, Chap. vii. Verse

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

16. *Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

17. *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

19. *Every*

19. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewen down and cast into the fire.*

20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS passage begins with a caution against false preachers: *Beware of false prophets,* but especially of those, *who come in sheeps cloathing,* who veil their malice under an affected modesty, and cover their vices with an exterior mortification. This air of piety is suspicious: 'tis common to seducers, and orthodox preachers; to those, who devour the flock, and those that feed it.

But our Saviour not only commands us to take heed of them; but also tells us by what marks we may distinguish them: *By their fruits ye shall know them.* They quote scripture eternally, and make it speak their sense by misinterpretations. They praise the severe discipline of the ancient church, and run down the practice and indulgence of the present. They characterise Christ's chaste spouse for a prostitute, and lay at her door all the debaucheries of her rebellious children. They require a blind obedience of their inferiors to their doctrine, yet refuse submission to their superiors. Their zeal is factious, their charity bitter, and their humility proud: and, in a word, they are sheep without, wolves within: *But inwardly they are ravening wolves.* A true pastor has also distinguishing marks, as well as the wolf: a charity without interest;

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interest; a zeal without bitterness; a true piety without hypocrisy: to inferiors he is sweet, submissive to superiors: *By their fruits ye shall know them.* O! that men should take so much pains to damn themselves, and to plunge their brethren into the same misfortune! But to head a party is a bewitching temptation, and experience proves, that few overcome it.

As our Saviour has given us a distinctive sign between false and true prophets; so, in the following verse, he leaves us a mark, by which we may know, whether our virtues are real, or counterfeit: *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.* What is this tree, but our heart? And what is this fruit but virtue? Our heart is right in the sight of God, if it produces charity, humility, submission to his providence, and all other virtues he either commands or counsels: *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.* It is fruit God requires, not blossoms: *i. e.* feeble and weak purposes of an entire conversion; which go no farther, but end where they began, and vanish in a moment: difficulties nip them in the bud, and sloth hinders them from growing to maturity. Is not this my case? I form sometimes good desires. I frame in the air projects of reformation; but alas! I stop here: and so bring forth my blossoms, but no fruit. I promise much, but do nothing.

But alas! good purposes, unless executed, will not save me: *Every tree, that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.* O! how severe is this sentence! and yet I do not tremble. How insupportable the torment it condemns me to! yet I am insensible. To be condemned to fire, who can endure it? But to eternal fire, who can comprehend it? Yet this is the doom of those, who yield not good fruit:

they

they shall be cast into the fire. They shall suffer torments ten millions of years; and when these are past, a thousand millions more. Their misery will always begin, but never end; for it will be eternal. O! that men would enter into this vale of fire and brimstone, whilst they live; few would be condemned to it after death. But they will not consider this dire effect of sin, to enjoy the pleasure of it; and they almost persuade themselves, there is no such place, if they can withdraw their thoughts from so unpleasing an object. But, alas! inconsideration is not the means to avoid the punishment, but a continual meditation upon it. This will touch our hearts, if they are not turned into stones, and produce the fruit of a sincere repentance, which alone can secure us.

O! let me not then be so unadvised, as, for a short satisfaction, to expose my soul to a punishment so severe! Strike me, O Jesus, with a dread of thy judgments, that I may fear to commit sin; and inflame me with thy love, that I may practise all virtues. These are the fruits thou dost expect of me. Cultivate my heart with thy grace, that it may bring them to maturity. These will not only free me from the sentence pronounc'd against the bad tree (*every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire*) but also place me in the possession of thy glory.

Some persuade themselves, if they believe in Christ, their salvation is secure. But our Saviour assures us they are mistaken. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* They must enliven their faith by good works: *But he, who doeth the will of my Father.* To acknowledge him for your God, and to disobey his commands, is to pronounce
your

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your own condemnation. Some think themselves saints, if they pass some time in a church, or in their closet. No doubt, we are obliged to pray, nay, and often; and, if possible, continually. But these prayers, do they render you more faithful to God? More obedient to his commands? If they do not, your sanctity is mere illusion and imposture. Without a total compliance with your duty, a submission to God's will, and an entire obedience to his laws, there can be no true sanctity. You only cry out, *Lord, Lord*. You confess him to be your Master, and treat him as your equal; and what will be the end? Christ tells us in the next verse: *And then will I profess unto them openly: I never knew ye*, Matth. vii. 23. Yet these are people, who not only believed, but prophesied in his name; who cast out devils, and wrought miracles. Nay, these extraordinary favours (which they bring as motives to obtain mercy) cry out aloud for justice. You cast out devils from your neighbour's body: but how many have you received into your own soul by sin? You have wrought miracles: you have cured the sick; raised the dead to life: but have you, by a sincere repentance, restored to a spiritual life, your soul wounded by lukewarmness, and killed by sin? Those gifts I bestowed on you for the good of others; but my grace, for your own sanctification. Those you have employ'd; this you have neglected: blind men canonized you for a saint; I place you among the sinners: I disavow you. O! how many in the world, who pass for great men, and great saints, will in the end be treated with an *I know you not!* They give alms; but they commit acts of injustice. They pray much; but they calumniate their neighbour more. They appear on Sundays in the church, but the whole week in taverns.

In

In fine, their lives are a medley of real sins, and of counterfeit virtues. We canonize these, and excuse those. But alas! God's judgment is not founded upon appearances, like ours; nor is he content with an obedience to some of his commands, and a contempt of others. He, who breaks one, is guilty of the transgression of all the rest. They therefore alone will be received into the kingdom of heaven, who do the will of God, who is in heaven; that is, who believe all Christ has revealed; who practise all he commands; and abstain from all he has forbid. *He that doth the will of my Father, shall enter into heaven.*

O my Saviour! never suffer thy poor servant to lead such a life, as at the last day to deserve this severe reproach. *I never knew you.* If you refuse me protection then, who will defend me? If you cast me off, who will receive me, but the devils, to rack, and hell, to torment me? I do acknowledge thee for my God: I obey thee as my Sovereign, and will execute all thy commands as my Master; and tho' hitherto thou hast known me as thy enemy, I trust thou wilt for the future know me as thy friend, and, in the end, reward me as thy faithful servant.

EPISTLE to the Romans, Chap. viii. Verse

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

13. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

15. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

16. *The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

17. *And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul continues to remind the Romans of their baptism, and of the promise made, when they received it. By it they are rescued from the state of sin; and therefore must not obey those vicious impressions, concupiscence raises in the flesh; but, being consecrated to God, they must follow the impulse and suggestions of the Spirit. And his reason is: *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

To live according to the flesh, is to lead a life conformable to its inclinations, that is, to indulge nature; to pamper sensuality; to flatter the passions; and to endeavour rather to satisfy, than repress them. Whosoever regulates his actions by these principles, *shall die*. For since our first parents sin, its poison has infected our nature, which revolts against reason: its desires are irregular: its inclinations sensual. They affect nothing but ease and pleasure, and consequently lead unto sin, and this to damnation, that is, to eternal death, *ye shall die*.

But if we mortify the deeds of the flesh, through the Spirit, we shall live. That is, if we abstain from those actions, to which our corrupt nature

nature carries us, and which God prohibits us, *we shall live*. These deeds are all acts of lust, all impurities, which the flesh covets, and our religion condemns; injustice, enmities, dissensions, and jealousies. In fine, all sins which take their source from the inordinate fallies of tainted flesh, and corrupt blood. We must resist these carnal suggestions; extinguish the desire; and, if possible, destroy this unhappy inclination that hurries us into dissoluteness and to destruction.

This Spirit, which St. Paul mentions, and by which we must combat, and overcome nature, is grace. This alone can render us victorious; and, therefore, 'tis our duty to demand it of God; for on it death and life depends: and, as it were, to assure the victory, we must *mortify the deeds of the body*; keep it low by abstinence and austerities; and, by a prudent severity, force it to obedience. This was St. Paul's method. *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*

I know, people of the world pretend, the precept of mortification was not intended for them: that it only obliges those, who retire into solitude, and profess a state of perfection above the common; but they are mistaken. The apostle speaks not here to religious, but to all the Roman converts: *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*; which is, in plain terms, to tell them, if they do not, *they shall die*: and our Saviour assures us, without this, we *cannot be his disciples*.

Mortification is a preservative against the contagion of vice, and certainly on that account necessary. We live in the midst of infection; a preservative is necessary. Every object invites, and our own nature inclines us to evil; our recreations, our business, our employments, are gene-

rally strong temptations ; which for the most part encrease with the height of our station. High feeding enlivens concupiscence ; company heats it ; and lewd examples enflame it. 'Tis extreme hard to steer between so many rocks, without shipwreck ; and impossible without danger. Nothing can secure us but a strict guard over our senses ; but a mortification of our passions, and a heart placed above the reach of sensual pleasures. You must watch over your senses ; keep them within compass ; and above all take care of your eyes. These let in ideas, that rouse the passions, and easily subdue the heart. In a word, temptation meets you in all places, and almost at all times. Nothing about you abates its force ; nay, every thing enforces it. If therefore mortification be necessary to weaken temptation, to keep it at a distance, and to procure the divine assistance, without which we shall certainly be overcome ; it is the duty of all, whether lay or ecclesiastic, to put it in practice, nor is it confin'd, as some would willingly have it, to those who are more immediately employ'd in the administration of religion.

If you ask, how far mortification obliges ? I answer : First, Tho' passion, temper, and other incentives, carry never so eagerly to the enjoyment of a creature, forbid under mortal sin ; you must deny yourself that satisfaction : you must repress immediately this unlawful inclination, and never suffer it to seize upon your heart. Secondly, You must employ a great care in restraining nature from those things that draw you into venial sin. These two obligations take in all men. Without the first, there is no salvation : without the second, it's in danger ; because venial sin leads unto mortal.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It is not only the duty of a Christian to mortify himself so far as is necessary for the avoiding of sin: he must also cut off all occasions of imperfections, and aim at virtue. And therefore he must examine all the motions of his soul, and suppress those that are contrary to that sanctity, Christ commands, and the gospel prescribes. Seek nothing but God; love all creatures in him, and only for him. Banish from your heart, chagrin, bitterness, and enmities, which render you troublesome to yourself, and uneasy to your neighbour: Give not place to too much joy, when things succeed well; nor to melancholy, when ill. Take away those racking solitudes, those fears that are excessive, and those hopes that are too passionate. Excuse not your faults with heat, nor hide them with artifice; much less must you lay them at your neighbour's door, and expose his honour, to save your own. Keep ill desires from your heart, and detraction from your tongue; speak without disguising truth, and rather blush before men, than tell an untruth in the sight of God. You are obliged to abstain from sin, and to practise virtue by the laws of your profession, and consequently to use all necessary means. Scripture and reason prescribe the mortification of our heart and senses, not only as convenient, but necessary: therefore it is every man's duty to apply it according to the rule of prudence and discretion.

If this be true, O God! how short have I fallen of my obligation! Alas! I have given full scope to my senses, and followed the impulse of every passion. What sense have I not gratified? What inclination have I baulked? Have I not lived, as if pleasure was my final end, and diversion my only business? How wide is this conduct from my profession, and thy law, my God? Thou commandest

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commandest me to take up my cross, to be happy hereafter; to weep for my sins; and to seek consolation only in grief, and pleasure in mourning. Thou didst bid me crucify my flesh: to what excess have I pampered it? To be humble: all my actions declare my ambition, and divulge my pride. I would not stoop to learn my duty; nor receive a charitable correction with patience, when I transgress it. I have, in fine, lived by fancy, without order, without restraint, wholly a slave to nature, and always refractory to the powerful persuasions of thy holy grace. I must therefore change my conduct, if I intend to live. I must not fawn upon nature, but, with St. Paul, chastise it: *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* Nothing can effect this great change, my God, but *thy Spirit*, that is, thy grace; which I beg with all the earnestness of a true penitent, sorrowful for the past, and resolved to make a thorough reformation for the future. 'Tis my duty to suffer with patience. How can I, without thy assistance? we are thy coheirs, on this condition; *if so be that we suffer.* Suffering with thee, is the only way to glory: *If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xvi. Verse

1. *And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.*

2. *And he called him, and said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward.*

3. *Then*

3. *Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.*

4. *I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.*

5. *So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first; How much owest thou unto my Lord!*

6. *And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and set down quickly, and write fifty.*

7. *Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? and he said, An hundred measures of wheat, and he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.*

8. *And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

9. *And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS passage represents to us a steward, accused of mismanagement of his master's concerns, and the same contriving to prevent his ruin by a new injustice, and, what is strange, his Lord praising his conduct. *The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.* But let us not imagine, God, who will condemn unrepenting sinners, praises their sins, or approves those actions, he will punish eternally. He praised indeed the steward's wisdom, tho' he blames his injustice; because he provided for the future against poverty,

and all the inconveniencies that wait on indigence, and at the same time he reprehends our indolence and folly, for taking less care of our salvation than of our temporal concerns. *For the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.* They labour with more sedulity, take more prudent measures to compass trifles, than eternal happiness. This is the meaning of the present parable, which lays open God's conduct towards us, and ours towards him.

We are only his stewards. He is absolute Master of the world: he has dominion of all things in heaven and on earth. All we possess is his, and even ourselves. He has indeed intrusted us with the management of many things. He has given us the use of them; but the property of nothing. The time we live is his: our health, our wit, all the faculties of our bodies, and all the powers of our soul. He put in our hands these talents, to improve them for his profit; *i. e.* for his glory and our own salvation: and the time will come, when he will call us to account, with a *Give an account of thy stewardship.* I have made you, to possess me hereafter, and given you time to labour in my service, that I might reward it. I have furnished you with a sharp wit, and a healthful body: with grace and convenience, not only to assist you, but even to render the accomplishment of your duty easy and pleasant. What account, O God, am I able to render of these favours, but an humble confession that I have betrayed my trust; misapplied your gifts; and turned them to your dishonour? I have thrown all my time away upon mere amusements, and yet I should be to some degree happy, had they been innocent. Raillery and satire have been the chief employments of my wit; and I have made little use of it, but either to censure my neighbour's virtue, or to rally his defects.

Vices,

Vices, not mortification, have impaired my health, and reduced my body to weakness and distempers. This I confess to my shame, but with repentance; and I confide, thou wilt, O God, take my unfeigned sorrow for satisfaction.

This master did not immediately turn off his steward: he gave him some time to make up his accounts. Thus God ordinarily forewarns us to be ready, and tells us, shortly he will call upon us. The infirmities, which attack us; age, which grows upon us; our friends, who die; are admonitions, to stand upon our guard, and assurances, God will call us to account, tho' we are ignorant of the moment. What then in prudence must we do, but imitate the wisdom of this unfaithful steward, tho' not his injustice? he lost no time; but immediately applied himself to find a resource for his misfortune; and his master could not but praise his sedulity and wisdom, tho' he hated his design. Our activity comes not short of this man's, when we propose to ourselves some temporal advancement. Good God! how many plots do we contrive to raise a fortune! with what heat, what sedulity, and dexterity, do we carry them on! to prevent a disgrace, we employ the intercession of friends, and sometimes of our enemies. O my soul! let us do at least as much for heaven as for a small portion of earth; as much to save, as we do to lose ourselves.

The steward, ascertained of his disgrace, endeavoured to find friends, that he might make a safe retreat, and a kind retirement: *I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me in their houses.* This was, no doubt, a wise, tho' an unlawful policy; for how could he lay out his master's goods for his own profit?

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But, dear Christians, what a Master do we serve! he gives us not the use only, but the profit, of all the goods he commits to our care; nay, he commands us to make friends with them, who will admit us to the enjoyments of heaven. We are at vast expence to wind ourselves into the favour of great men; we buy their friendship with money and slavery; yet alas! they are friends, not to us, but their own interest. They make large promises of favour and assistance, but they end in smog; and they esteem themselves our friends, if they turn not our enemies. We have no true, no powerful, friends, but the poor and needy. These poor creatures, that are not seen without horror by some, and without contempt by all; that seem impotent and unserviceable; are true friends, and powerful assistants. They will procure heaven for you, if you supply their indigence, and you have God's word for your security: *And I say unto you: make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* Riches are the cause of sin, when we possess them with too great an affection, or spend them with a vain profusion. But when, out of a principle of charity, we divide them among the necessitous; they are the origin of a thousand blessings in this world, and a sure means to heap up treasures for the next.

Why, then, do I not make friends to receive me into heaven, as well as this steward, to find a retreat. The end of my stewardship will come, as well as his; and then I shall be in no capacity to manage God's gifts to my advantage, but must render a severe account of the past.

I. EPISTLE to the Cor. Chap. x. Verse

6. *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

7. *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

8. *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*

9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

10. *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

11. *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

12. *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*

13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul draws an argument from the severe punishment God inflicted on the rebellious Jews in the desert, to dissuade the Corinthians from imitating their example. For he assures them, that God's revenge on the sins of the Israelites is but a figure of his severity to disobedient and refractory Christians: *All these things happened unto them for ensamples.*

But

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But he dissuades them from evil desires: *we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.* The Israelites took a surfeit of the manna, and earnestly desired flesh. They were not satisfied with the miraculous nourishment, God provided every day. They would pamper their sensuality. God yielded to their importunity; but his revenge followed his grant, and the punishment of their demand, the pleasure of their palate.

This should teach us *(for all these things happened unto them for ensamples)* to how great a danger they expose themselves who importune God to satisfy their inordinate desires, and as it were force him to grant their petitions; and how gracious he is, when he in his mercy refuses, for our salvation, what he could not grant but in his anger, for our damnation. Had not a denial been more advantageous to the Jews than a grant, followed by such an amazing punishment? did the pleasure of eating quails bear any proportion with the chastisement of their murmurs and importunity? God withstood for some time their demand, to see if they would desist. He refused to send them flesh, which he foresaw would cost them so dear. But from prayers, they broke out into complaints: they questioned his power, and doubted of his goodness, and seemed to compel God to grant their request; which they esteemed a favour, till the death of some thousands proved too evident, it was a severe revenge upon their sensuality.

Oh! how often has my behaviour resembled that of the Jews! I have importuned thee, O God, to second my desires, which were always foolish, and sometimes criminal. Give me, said I, O God, a large fortune; a high station. Let me be admired by some, and esteemed by all. Thou didst refuse my request, and keptest me low: I repined at thy conduct; blamed thy providence, and har-
boured

boured unseemly thoughts of thy goodness. But oh! I am undeceived. I beg'd a favour: thou would'st have given me a curse by granting my request, but a blessing by refusing it. Had I obtained my wish, I should have first forgot thee, and then myself. A high post would have turned my brains, and great treasures would have captivated my heart. I should have quite abandoned thee, to gratify sense; and, in a word, lost heaven for a fading fortune. Grant me therefore nothing that is displeasing to thee, or that will prove hurtful to me.

Secondly, *Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed.* The Moabites knew Israel was invincible, whilst he remained obedient to God's commands: therefore, to avert the storm that hung over their heads, they endeavoured to debauch them, and sacrificed their daughters honour to the publick safety. The Israelites, overcome by the women's courtship, fell not only into the sin of fornication, but also into that of idolatry. But this infidelity inflamed God's wrath against the whole army: and nothing could make atonement for the offence, but the lives of twenty three thousand men. St. Paul mentions the punishment of these impure delinquents, to fright the Corinthians from this wretched sin, and with them all Christians: yet, notwithstanding, we imitate the Jews in this, as well as in other vices. Neither promises of heaven can allure us, nor threats of hell fright us from this sin. Good God! who would think that after such a law as *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, there should be so many found to transgress it. Many, who would have a horror of the sins of murder and injustice, are not so much frightened at this of impurity; and yet this is as severely forbid; and from the beginning has been more severely punished. This wretched sin drew
down

down from heaven, first the deluge upon the whole world; and then fire upon five cities: and, not to mention God's judgments upon particular men, empires and kingdoms have been buried in their ruins for this sin alone. And certainly he has left posterity so many instances of his wrath against it, to deter men from committing it, and to give us some idea of those torments he has prepared in hell for the guilty, by the greatness of those he has inflicted on them in this world.

This sin, as well as all mortal, deprives us of heaven, and, unrepented, will cast us unto hell: and, what is worse, when once it is turned into a habit, it is scarce ever shaken off. It runs on for life; and only leaves us on the brink of the grave. It weakens reason, and turns us wholly into sense! so that we become brutish, stupid, insensible. In fine, we are unfit to receive grace, and more unfit to make use of it; and seldom make greater efforts to disengage ourselves, than by bare wishes, and fleeting desires. This is the true state of those, who are habituated in this sin; and therefore I may conjure them with St. Paul: *Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed.* Weigh the pleasure, which is short, with the punishment, that is eternal; and the loss of sanctifying grace, with the danger of never recovering it. If it be hard to stand firm against temptation, it is ten times harder to rise. The same motives, that persuaded you to lose your innocence, will dissuade you from repentance.

O my Saviour! preserve me from this precipice, which so few escape, and so many fall into! All virtues are thy gifts, but chastity in a peculiar manner. Remove occasions, and keep me in humility. The best security is to stand out of the reach of danger. It is hard to be chaste, when we hover about those objects, that tempt to impurity;
and

and impossible, if we only presume on our own force.

Thirdly, *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* The stiff-necked Jews, upon their very entrance into their so long promised, and so long wished for, Canaan, being tired with the journey, began their old complaints, not only against Moses, but even against God. They look'd back upon the life they led in Egypt; and the slavery, they underwent in Pharaoh's service, now seemed pleasing, compared with their present fatigues. What was the event of these murmurs, but a sudden chastisement! For God sent into the camp fiery serpents, which executed his revenge upon the murmurers. This punishment St. Paul represents to the Corinthians, as a dissuasive against murmuring, when God's orders suit not with our inclinations.

We imitate the Jews by tempting God, when we diffide in his promises: when we will try his power by asking miracles, or his patience by continuing to offend him. These sins he punished in the Jews, and will more severely in Christians. They are crimes that insult his very Person, and his great attributes, fidelity, omnipotence, and sanctity. Let us then remain satisfied: he will stand to his promises, if we fulfil the conditions. Let us submit with resignation to his providence; and not, out of curiosity, or presumption, ask proofs of his power; lest we feel it by an extreme punishment. Let us experience it rather by the strength of his grace, which an humble and fervent petition will procure, than the extremity of his anger.

Put not his patience to a tryal by a continuation of offences: tho' he can endure our weakness, he will not our presumption. And if you rely too much upon his mercy, you will certainly awake his justice. His mercy should invite you to repentance,

penance, not move you to sin; and he hates to be made the occasion of sin, which he forbids under pain of his indignation.

Thy ways, O Lord, are just and merciful: I will not search into thy counsels, which I am unable to discover; nor into thy conduct, I cannot understand. I rest content with my ignorance, and am convinced, it is prudent to adore thy providence, but dangerous to examine it. God's justice upon his chosen people is *written for my instruction*, viz. that I may become wise by their misfortune, and cease to commit those sins, which God punished in them with so great severity.

But besides, St. Paul draws another consequence, *therefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*. Never any nation gave greater proofs of man's stupidity and weakness, than the Jews. God shew'd his omnipotence by a thousand miracles wrought in their presence; and his kindness by as many favours. He divided the sea, to open a passage: rocks provided water, and heaven meat. They saw his Majesty upon Sina, and trembled at the awful appearance of their Creator. Who would not think, that men, in such circumstances, furnished with such sensible arguments of his Divinity, were above the temptation of infidelity? Yet these men (O the insensible corruption of human nature!) courted by so many favours; convinced by so many wonders; fell not only into complaints, but even into idolatry. Have we not all reason to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*? And he that standeth, *so take heed lest he fall*?

: Had only one fallen into that heinous crime, it had been a warning sufficient to arm us against an over-weaning confidence. For what happens to one, may possibly befall another: but when we see so many thousands engaged in the apostacy; nay,

may, and the high-priest himself; such an unheard of weakness should convince us to evidence, that, as there is no security in this world against temptation, so there is none against sin. Rely not therefore, neither on temper nor virtue. That tends to pleasure, and this may be lost. Stand upon your guard, and play not with danger, lest it overpower you. To think you will not be overcome, is a great step to be undeceived by your fall. Still hope the best, and fear the worst. Let grace be the source of your hope, and your own weakness of your fear. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.* His assistance will suffice, but it is your duty to concur. Petition his goodness; implore his mercy; importune his only Son to procure grace, not only to conserve his favour, but also to give you the will to employ it to his glory, and your salvation. O my God! when I behold my weakness, I tremble. Yet when I consider thy goodness, I confide. I can do nothing without, but, with thy assistance, all things are easy.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xix. Verse

41. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*

42. *Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

43. *For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,*

44. *And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not*

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leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

45. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought.

46. Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer : but ye have made it a den of thieves.

47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him.

The MORAL REFLECTION.

WE read in this Gospel two strange miracles: Of compassion in God, and of obstinacy in a rebellious city. He labours to mollify the hearts of its inhabitants, harder than the rocks, which encompass it ; he drops tears from his sacred eyes, to draw some from theirs : *He beheld the city, and wept over it.* He promises pardon for past offences, if they will take the pains to ask it. He joins threats to promises ; that, if love will not, interest may bring them back to their duty : *The days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side ; and shall lay thee even with the ground.* In short, our Saviour seems concerned at this impenitent city's obstinacy, as if his own happiness depended on hers.

But this unfortunate city, now hardened in iniquity, had no marks of piety left, but the temple, profaned with the blackest abominations. She shut her ears to our Saviour's call, and so drew poison from the antidote, and hastened her ruin, by rejecting the means so mercifully offered to avert it.

Our

Our Saviour's compassion over this sinful city is but an emblem of his piety towards every sinner : And his conjuring it to repent, with so much affection, demonstrates his sincere desire of our conversion. But then the conduct of Jerusalem is too lively a picture of ours : We are as insensible of our sad condition, as she ; as rebellious to God's grace ; as deaf to his invitations to repentance. St. Austin cries out : * *'Tis a sight worthy of admiration to see God continually labouring for the repentance of a sinner* : He enlightens his understanding ; inflames his will ; alarms his fears with the prospect of pains, his hopes with the view of pleasures. But then it is more strange, that we should resist these charms ; that we should not let fall one tear to lament our sins, whilst he pours forth torrents to bewail them.

If my state deserves thy tears, O Saviour, they certainly deserve my own. Thou knowest the condition of a sinner : Thou wilt condemn his vices, if impenitent ; and crown his virtues, if penitent. Thou didst create the fire that will torment him : Thou knowest its violence : Thou didst prepare the glory thy saints enjoy ; and therefore dost comprehend its value. In fine, both must be extraordinary ; because the return of a sinner causes tears of joy in the angels ; and impenitence, those of sorrow in thyself. O ! let thy grief for my sins persuade me to detest them, and let me contribute to the joy of the saints and angels by a sincere conversion.

The tears of our Saviour teach us not only to deplore our own sins, but also those of our neighbour. It is certain, the quality of brother calls for tenderness, and the precept of charity for com-

* *Magnum speculum videre Deum occupatum pro te. S. Aug.*

passion: Their blindness deserves pity; and the dangers they are exposed to, tears. But we must not stand at a bare compassion; but endeavour to help them out of the precipice. First, pour out tears to appease God's anger, and obtain mercy for them by works of charity and mortification. According to your circumstance, add good counsel, and pious instructions: remind him of the danger, and propose all those motives that charity shall suggest. Oftentimes a pious conversation works more than a learned sermon; and an advice from a friend, than an exhortation from a priest.

O! how grateful to God is the conversion of a sinner! He that contributes to this charitable work, to the best of his abilities, will never fall short of a blessing. God designs heaven for those, who lead others thither.

Thy labours here on earth, O God, to draw souls to thyself, declare their value; and the price of their delivery from bondage, thou didst pay upon the cross, manifests the love thou dost bear them! I can therefore do nothing more acceptable to thy majesty than to implore thy mercy for those, who stray from thy service, and to apply all my care to reduce them to a sense of their duty. I will use all my power to correct my inferiors, and all the means prudence shall suggest, and zeal inspire me with, to reform my equals. And when my labour proves ineffectual; I will have recourse to thee by prayers. The heart of every sinner is in thy hands, as well as those of princes. It is in thy power to turn those of stone into wax, and to draw tears of repentance from dry eyes, as well as streams of water from a rock.

Our Saviour entered into the temple, when he had deplored the ruin of the city; and thence he whipt out the buyers and sellers. *My house*, says he, *is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

thieves. This not only condemns the practice of the Jews, who traded in their temple ; but also of all those Christians, who frequent the churches sometimes out of human motives ; and much more, if they are led thither by any criminal designs. The church is a house of prayer ; a place dedicated to the service of God, and consecrated to his honour : A place, where we ought to obtain pardon of past offences, not to be prophaned by new ones. We must therefore enter with respect, and not only keep an exterior decency, but an interior recollection. We must not entertain our thoughts with vain or secular affairs ; but adore that Majesty, who is more immediately present to hear our prayers, to receive our petitions, and to punish our irreverence. Permit me not, O God, to insult thee in thy own house, and to offer thee that disrespect, I dare not offer a prince, who has nothing different from myself but his quality. Thou art my God : To thee I owe my being ; and from thee I expect my Salvation.

I. EPISTLE to the Corinthians, Chap. xii. Verse

2. *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

3. *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed : and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

4. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

5. *And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*

6. *And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all,*

M 3

7. *But*

7. *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THANKS be to God, there appear no more idols in Europe ; they stand no more on altars to receive worship. So that the first verse of this epistle seems not to concern us. *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols.* But tho' they concern us not in the literal sense, in a moral they do. For they advise us not to relapse into sin, when once we have renounced it, either by baptism, or by a sincere repentance.

The object of every disorderly passion, is a kind of idol ; and when we embrace it, we pay an act of adoration, and place it on an altar in our hearts, tho' not in a temple : and, what is worse, after a solemn detestation, that is, after repentance, we fall into the same idolatry : we commit those sins so lately deplored, by doating on all those very objects that ensnared us.

Before we fall into new disorders, we should put to ourselves the Apostle's question, *What fruit had ye in those that are past?* Alas ! what fruit can we reap from sin, but a short satisfaction, and a long repentance ? but the forfeiture of our innocence, with that of heaven ? Indeed, we promised ourselves some happiness ; but how can we find it in our greatest misery ? thorns cannot bear grapes, nor sin bring forth any felicity.

This we have experienced by frequent disappointments : why will we return to the same error ? why will we suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by sense and passion ?

No, no, it is most true, O God, what St. Austin declared : we can find no happiness, when separated from thee by sin ; nor feel any misery, when united

ted to thee by charity. One day spent in thy service gives more content, than a thousand in riot. How many have learnt this by experience, and yet how few draw advantage from the knowledge? We return to those dumb idols, ambition, injustice, and revenge, that have so often deluded us; that have promised pleasure, and regaled us with trouble, remorse, and shame.

We have often repented. Ought not the same motives, that perswaded us to leave the state of sin, with-hold us from relapsing into it? The fear of a sudden death, the severity of God's justice, the torments of hell, and the joys of heaven, moved us to forsake all criminal engagements. Are sudden deaths less frequent? Is God less severe? Are the torments of hell more supportable, or the joys of paradise less valuable than they were?

Alas! these remain the same, but I am become less sensible. These things, that struck me then with horror, now make no impression. The custom of sinning has wore off the foulness of sin; and my dotage on the present, all apprehension of the future. My state, O God, is desperate, unless thou dost break those chains that fetter me.

The sin of Adam has plunged his posterity into so desperate a weakness, that we cannot move one step towards heaven without the help of grace, which Christ purchased for us by his bitter death and passion. *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* And our Saviour tells us also, *without his assistance we can do nothing.* All that is virtuous in us, even our thoughts, is the effect of thy bounty, my God: but my offences are the product of my own malice. In this state of corruption, I enjoy a kind of liberty more fatal than slavery, *i. e.* I can offend thee, my God, but am unable

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to implore thy mercy, much less to deserve it. *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

Far be it from me, with Pelagius, to make myself great, by diminishing thy goodness, or to cast on my creation the disorders that spring from my disobedience. Thou didst create me innocent: rebellion against thy command made me guilty, and guilt divested me of original justice, and all the consequences of this favour. But thou, O Son of God, didst make thyself man, to fortify my weakness by thy infirmities, and to put me into the way of life by thy dolorous, but precious death: this not only enables me to invoke thy name, but to obtain pardon for my offences: to execute thy commands, and follow thy counsels. Therefore all the good I do is the effect of thy grace, and the grace itself of thy liberality. It is a favour thou dost bestow, not a reward I deserve.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xviii, Verse

9. *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*

10. *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

11. *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

13. *And the publican standing a-far off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

14. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

WE read here the condemnation of a Pharisee, and the justification of a publican. The one begg'd a favour of God by pleading his own merits; the other sued for pardon by a sincere acknowledgment of his sins, and of his unworthiness to obtain it. Yet that presuming sinner return'd a sinner? and this humble penitent received pardon. *This man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*

How often do we imitate the Pharisee's pride? How seldom the publican's humility? We enter into the church upon a pretence to pray; but we appear in state and equipage, not in the posture of a suppliant, much less of a sinner, and least of all of a penitent. No! like the pharisee, we stand; as if we intended rather to brave our Maker, than to appease his anger. If we ask a favour, we expect the grant rather as a debt, than an alms or a gratuity. If God refuses our requests, we fly out into complaints and murmurs: if he is pleased to grant them, into pride, *that we are not like other men.*

But why, proud worm, are you not like other men? Because God has favoured you more? His favours are indeed marks of his goodness, but not of your greatness. The account, you must once render, rises with the benefits you have received; and so will your punishment, if you have misapply'd them. Is not this your care? How often has he warn'd you of your disorders by interior inspirations, by reading, and exhortations?

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tions? How often has he conjured you to return to your duty: and yet, deaf to his call, you have refused his invitations, and rather obeyed the inclination of passion, than his persuasion to repentance. But you are not *like other men, extortioners, adulterers*. Thank God for the favour: his grace exempted you from these sins, not your own strength: your innocence is his gift, not your own purchase. Acknowledge it with humility, and compassionate your neighbour's weakness; but take care not to insult. Whosoever wonders how a Christian can fall into such crimes, by a just judgment of God falls into the very same, and learns by his own experience, that he, who commits the least sins, is capable to commit the greatest.

Let the misfortune of others put you upon your guard: let it move you to implore God's assistance, to avoid those occasions, and temptations that have overcome them; and assure yourself, your security lies rather in flight than resistance. If you are not *like other men*, that is, neither unjust, nor unchaste; you are at least in pride and presumption; and certainly he, who is guilty of these crimes, has no cause to applaud his own conduct, or to censure that of his neighbour.

O my God! I confess I am not like other men, but ten times more ungrateful, more wicked. Had they received of your bounty those graces, you have bestowed on me, they would have employed them to your glory, and their own perfection; whilst I, alas! by a supine negligence have turned them to my prejudice. How often have I received thy sacred body and precious blood? One communion, well performed, is sufficient to enflame a soul with the love of a seraphin, and to turn a sinner into a saint. Yet, after so many communions, I am still the same:

a slave to my passions, and a stranger to virtue. I sleep in my imperfections, and, insensible of my folly, make no effort to remove them.

You *fast twice a week: you pay tithes*, and injure no man. The Pharisee did as much as this comes to; however, it did not justify him. Those exterior duties of religion, that maceration of the body, if done with a pure heart, and a sincere intention, are, no doubt, laudable actions, and grateful to God. But oh! how often have such actions nothing pious but the appearance? The angel of the church of Sardis was reprehended in the revelations *because his works were not perfect before God*, Rev. iii. 2. He did all the functions of a bishop: he preached, catechised, and laboured in the conversion of souls; his conduct appeared not only regular, but zealous and edifying. Yet all this in the sight of God was imperfect within, tho' dazzling without. His zeal was mix'd with pride or interest, and one of those vices is sufficient to spoil the most laudable action, and to transform it into vice.

Let us not therefore lay too much stress upon those exterior actions; neither mortifications, nor chastity, nor justice, will sanctify us, unless they are accompanied with christian humility. The Pharisee fasted, prayed, and payed tithes; yet he returned from the temple a sinner as he came; and the reason was, because he presumed too much on his own merits, and despised his neighbour. This should teach us to begin a spiritual life with humility. Upon this basis, virtue stands firm: without it, it falls to the ground. God withdraws his hand, permits us to fall sometimes into the most shameful disorders, to teach us, by our own experience, that our virtue comes from him; and nothing but diffidence in our own strength,

strength, and confidence in his goodness, can preserve it.

The publican entered the temple with the Pharisee ; but as their dispositions were different, so was also the effects of their prayers. He durst not come near the altar ; *the publican stood a-far off* ; he retired into a corner, awed by the majesty of the place, and more by his own unworthiness to appear before God, whom he had offended. He was so taken up with a true sense of his sins, that he never thought of his virtues. With eyes cast down, he smote his breast, and cried out for mercy, putting all his confidence in the goodness of God, and none in his own merit. *He would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven ; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

But tho' he feared to look up to heaven, God cast down a favourable eye upon him ; and he obtained pardon, because he was almost ashamed to ask it, and thought himself wholly unworthy to receive it. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ; for every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

This publican's conduct is a pattern God has set all sinners, who sincerely sue for pardon at his tribunal ; they must acknowledge their sins with sorrow and confusion ; ask pardon with confidence on the one side, and with a profound humility on the other ; rely on God's goodness, and our Saviour's merits, and place all their hope in his mercy. These dispositions soften his anger, and disarm his justice. *He will not despise a contrite and humble heart, Psal. li. 17.*

Give me, O God, the humble sentiments of this publican, and banish from my heart the pride of the Pharisee. I can lay before thy divine Majesty

Majesty no motives to pardon me, but thy goodness, and my unworthiness. The evil I have done is my own, and all the good belongs to thee. Behold therefore a poor sinner at thy feet, bathed in tears, and drowned in sorrow; penitent for past offences, and resolved for the future, by thy assistance, to live up to his duty, and to die in thy service.

I. EPISTLE to the Corinthians, Chap. xv. Ver.

1. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;*

2. *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

3. *For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures:*

4. *And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.*

5. *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.*

6. *After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.*

7. *After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles.*

8. *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

9. *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

10. *But*

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10. *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul conjures the Corinthians, to call to mind the doctrine he preached, and they received. The advice is profitable to all Christians, and their miscarriages come, in great part, from the neglect of this wholesome counsel. We will not take pains to compare our conduct with the maxims of our religion, nor our actions with our duty. And so the one bears no proportion to the other. But if we submit our understanding to the truths God has revealed, why do we not submit our wills to the obligations he has imposed? If it be an impiety not to believe, it is a folly to believe *in vain*. And certainly, this is the case of all those, who square not their lives by the rule of their profession. God has made indeed glorious promises to Christians; but with this proviso, that they keep his commandments. Without this, faith will not save us. *We believe in vain*. And the very means, God was pleased to give us for our salvation, will, by our neglect, only serve to plunge us into a greater misery.

The capital points of our religion are the cruel death, and glorious resurrection, of the Son of God: and as they are the chief, so they were the first the apostle taught the Corinthians; *For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also receiv'd, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that he rose again the third day.* The severe morals of the gospel are
consequences

consequences of the first: for if he led a mortified life for us, and died a cruel death, we must die to all creatures, and (what is more hard) even to ourselves, that we may live only to him, and for him. For he came into the world, not only to redeem us by his death, but to instruct us by his life; to be both our ransom, and model. Hence he tells us, that all, who pretend to be his children, must take up their cross, and bear part of his torments, to partake of his glory. Yes, O Lord, the pains, you have suffered for me, impose on me a strict obligation of suffering for you. To enter into your glory, I must partake of your torments, and bear with submission all those crosses, you are pleased to send me.

Let not this doctrine, of suffering mortification and crosses, fright us from our duty. Christ *rose again the third day*: and therefore the apostle draws this consequence, that, when we die to this world, we shall rise to another. The resurrection of our Saviour is not only the source, but an assurance, of ours: I am obliged to suffer, because you, my Saviour, have suffered. But then, I shall one day arise again, because you are resuscitated: and if I die in your grace, I shall revive, to live eternally in your glory.

Oh! the goodness of my Creator! Oh! the infinite bounty! For a short labour, he recompenses with an eternal reward; and afflictions, that are past, with glory that never ends.

It is true, what this apostle tells us, that, were our hopes and fears only confined to this world, and that our expectations vanish'd with our last breath, Christians would be the most miserable and foolish of all creatures. But, relying on the certain hope of a glorious resurrection, they are the most prudent, as well as the most happy. Those libertines, that pretend there is, after this
life

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life, no reward for virtue, nor punishment for vice ; in spite of infidelity, are continually haunted with the apprehension, that *perhaps there is* : and this damps their spirits, and dashes all their pleasures with gall and wormwood. And how is it possible for a reasonable creature to enjoy one moment's quiet, when he reflects, he hazards an eternity of pleasure ; and exposes himself to everlasting torments, upon a *bare perhaps* ?

But, then, the thought of another life, that renders the libertine miserable in the very height of a criminal prosperity, fills a pious Christian with joy and consolation, in the midst of the greatest pressures, and adversity. I know, says he, that tho' my Redeemer died, he is now alive ; *And that, one day, I shall see my Saviour in this flesh*, Job xix. 25. and, as I firmly hope, not to punish my crimes, but to crown my obedience to his commands. It is true, I must, for some time, declare war against my passions ; crucify my flesh, and bear all crosses with resignation : but this contest will soon end, and the recompence will last eternally. Oh ! what proportion between a felicity, that is not only above expression, nay, and comprehension, but eternal also, and a suffering that cannot be long, and may be shorter than we imagine !

We sacrifice our ease with joy, and often our lives, to procure temporal preferments ; altho' the success be wholly uncertain, the enjoyment unsatisfactory, and the possession short and precarious. The hope of a happy issue sweetens our labour, inspires courage, and renders us insensible to all the mortifications we meet in the pursuit. Must not, then, the expectation of heaven work the same effects on those, who carry their thoughts to a future state ; who have an assurance, that all, that is either pleasing or painful in this world, will end : and that, if we live up to the
duty

duty of a christian, we shall reign eternally with Christ in heaven.

Should I groan under the pangs of diseases, under the lashes of flandering tongues, and all the inconveniences of poverty and contempt; these misfortunes will soon end, and the reward of my patience will be eternal.

St. Paul knew, the world would never receive the severe morals of the gospel, nor embrace the incomprehensible mysteries of faith, unless they were persuaded, that hereafter they should revive, to receive, in the next world, the reward of their obedience to Christ's commands in this: and therefore he proves our Saviour's resurrection, with arguments able to convince the most incredulous. He *was seen*, says he, *of Cephas*, then *of the twelve*: afterwards *of above five hundred*: then *of James*, and then *of all the apostles*. What a cloud of witnesses to establish this great mystery? But fewer would not convince the world of a truth, which, by a necessary consequence, obliges mankind to believe all the sublime mysteries, and to practise the strict morals of the gospel.

O my God and Redeemer! I believe thou didst die for my sins, and rise again for my justification. Thy resurrection is an assurance of mine; the members must be like their head: and I firmly hope by thy merits, to rise the object of thy love, not of thy hatred.

But then, with bended knees, and a contrite heart, I implore *thy grace*; for *by the grace of God, I am what I am*: in regard of eternal life, what are we without it? We cannot make one step to heaven; we are examples of weakness; we are slaves to sin; and, what is strange, proud in our misery, and rash in our infirmity: But, with it, what fervour? What courage?

we rather fly, than walk, in the way of God's commands. Nothing seems hard, but moderation in our piety, and a mean in our mortifications. How did the apostles tremble, before they received the Holy Ghost? With what courage did they bear, not only reproaches, but torments, when they had received it? And as it animates us to act and suffer for God; so it imprints humility to attribute all the glory to him. All the good I do, O God, is the effect of thy grace; and the bad, of my own malice! To thee I owe my virtues, and to myself my vices.

What a happy creature should I be, could I say with St. Paul, *his grace was not bestow'd upon me in vain*. But, alas! to my shame I must confess, that, as I have received more graces than many saints now in heaven, so I have resisted more than many, who now suffer for their ingratitude in hell.

But tho' grace be necessary for my salvation, it will not save me alone: *Not I, but the grace of God, which was with me*. That is, not grace, alone, nor I alone; but both together. Grace inspires us to do well; it fortifies us; but we must receive it, and act with it: for, as St. Austin declares to us, *He, who made us without our help, will not save us without our co-operation*.

It is an error to deny the necessity of grace, and no less to affirm it retrenches our liberty. We cannot practise the least good action without it; yet we may sin with it: the pride of man invented the first; error, impiety, and libertinism the second.

I confess my Saviour, that by the sweat of thy brows, and the blood of thy veins, thou hast merited grace for me, and the whole world; that, without it, I am unable, not only to love thee, but even to implore thy assistance, or pronounce
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thy holy name! But yet I may abuse thy gift, and receive it, not to thy glory, but my condemnation. Tho' it invites, it does not force me. And thou hast been pleased to leave me this liberty, because heaven is a reward, not a free gift.

GOSPEL of St. Mark, Chap. vii. Verse

31. *And again departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.*

32. *And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech: and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.*

33. *And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;*

34. *And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.*

35. *And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.*

36. *And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it:*

37. *And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE bodily infirmities of this deaf and dumb man, according to the holy fathers, represents the spiritual diseases of a sinner; and their cure, his return to God, by a sincere repentance.

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He is deaf to divine inspirations, and shuts his ears to the clamour of his conscience, which, night and day, upbraids his ingratitude, and lays before him the dismal consequences that wait on sin: he is dumb also; he neither asks grace to repent, nor implores God's mercy for pardon. What cure for so desperate a disease? He must be brought to Jesus. He is the only physician of our souls, as well as our only Redeemer: his power is infinite, and his goodness without bounds. So that he is able to cure the most mortal diseases, and will, if we have recourse to his mercy.

Oh! what happiness for sinners, to have at hand so certain a remedy for all their miseries! Did we groan under a mortal distemper of the body, should we not consult a doctor, who, we were assured, would restore us to health? Should we not abandon ourselves wholly to his direction? and follow his prescriptions, tho' repugnant to nature?

Could any man be so foolish, as to conceal his disease? or to give no ear to counsel? Oh! what comparison, between the diseases of the body, and those of the soul; between the death of the one, and the other! The Omnipotent Hand, that made us, can cure all our spiritual distempers, and that Goodness, that redeemed us, will, if we make our addresses to him with a sincere sorrow, and with an humble heart. He bids us ask, and he will give; that is, he will reinstate us in his favour, raise us to the dignity, not of his servants, but his children; and entitle us to heaven. Who will not purchase so great a treasure, at so small expence?

Our Saviour withdrew the infirm man from the croud, before he cured him: he would teach us by this conduct, that the noise of passions, and the tumult of affairs, drown the voice of God,
and

and render a sinner deaf to his inspirations: that the first step to repentance is retirement and solitude. Alas! what possibility of hearing the voice of God, when the world stuns us with invitation to pleasure? when it ruffles all our senses, and stifles not only reflexion, but even thought? Company and occasions first withdraw us from our duty, and plunge us into disorders; and then, what hopes of returning to the one, or leaving the other, so long as we remain in the reach of the same temptation? Take this for a certain truth: *We seldom recover grace, in the company, in which we lost it.*

Let us therefore, for some moments every day, at least, retire into our closet, and pray, with the prophet, *Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth*, 1 Sam. iii. 9. and by the assistance of thy grace will execute thy commands: Oh! it is better to follow thy call to repentance, in this life, than to hear, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire*, in the next.

Our Saviour (says the evangelist) *looked up to heaven, and sighed*. Was this necessary for the cure? No. But it was for our instruction: he would teach us, by his example, how hard it is to convert those sinners, who will not hear of the dangerous state they live in; much less reveal it to those, whose charity may persuade them to leave it. Oh! how many Christians live whole years in this unhappy and deplorable disposition! Desire them to retreat from their sinful course whilst they have time; tell them, that life is uncertain; that the first time they shut their eyes to sleep, they may perchance never open them, but to see themselves involved in devouring flames, and to groan eternally under the heavy hand of God's exasperated justice. This charitable advice receives no other return than Ahab

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made the prophet Michaiah, *I hate him ; for he never prophesieth good unto me*, 2 Chron. xviii. 7. or at least they answer as Felix did St. Paul, *Go thy ways for this time : when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*, Acts xxiv. 25.

Good God ! is it then an affront to stop your ruin ? to lead you to heaven ? Has hell such charms ? or is heaven so frightful ? so despicable ? For what will you find time and leisure, if you have none to purchase an eternity of happiness, none to avoid an eternity of misery ? Take the psalmist's advice : *To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*, Psal. xcix. 8. Expect not till to-morrow, before you resolve to obey it. The present is at your disposal ; the future is uncertain. Why then, dear Christian, will you put to a venture your salvation, which, with all your care, can never be too secure.

Our Saviour commanded the multitude to conceal the miracle. Why, O Lord, this prohibition ? Wert thou within the reach of temptation ? Could pride come near thy soul ? Alas ! no : But tho' this caution was not necessary to guard thy humility, it was for ours. It teaches us to exercise our charity, only to please God, not to draw the applause of men : and that whatever good we do others, we do none to ourselves, if our actions are tainted with vanity. Pride is the first passion we feel, and the last that leaves us : it is interwoven with our nature, and springs often even from vice itself : no wonder therefore, if virtue, that deserves praise, raises in us a desire to be praised. For this reason our Saviour commands us to pray in secret, and not even to let our left hand know those alms and charities we distribute with our right. Why
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this caution? But to shew that vanity grows near virtue, and that a publick charity endangers humility; which is the foundation of all Christian perfection.

But the more our Saviour commanded secrecy, the more they publish'd it, *saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.* Thus God rewards his servants even in this world: they fly praise, condemn applause, and seek nothing but contempt; but the more they endeavour to hide their virtue, the more he proclaims it: so that even the most proud, who will not stoop to the practice of humility, admire it in others.

O sinner! who hitherto hast been deaf to God's inspirations, how advantageous would it be to thee, and even glorious, to proclaim his goodness, and manifest his power, by a sincere repentance! How would those, you scandalized by your crimes, be edified by your virtues, and not only admire God's Power, but also praise his goodness, and cry out, with those in the gospel, *He hath done all things well, he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*

II. EPISTLE to the Cor. Chap. iii. Verse

4. *And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:*

5. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God;*

6. *Who also hath made us ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.*

7. *But if the ministration of death written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away;*

8. *How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?*

9. *For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

WE are commanded to have confidence in God; but this must rise from the merits of Jesus Christ; *such trust we have through Christ, to God-ward*: if we look upon ourselves only, we shall find nothing, that can give us confidence we shall feel the effects of God's mercy: every thing rather inspires fear of his justice: what can we discover, O God, within us, but sin, corruption and ingratitude? But the blood of Jesus cries louder for mercy, than my sins for vengeance: he is my Advocate at thy throne; and canst thou, O eternal Father! have the heart to refuse what thy Son has the goodness to ask in my favour? O no! the sight of his wounds disarms thy justice, and turns thy just resentment into pity and compassion. I build therefore my confidence on thy love to thy Son, and on his to me. He opposes his wounds to thy just anger, and pleads, stretch'd on a cross, for my pardon.

Of myself I am unable to make one step to heaven; *not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.* I cannot practise one supernatural virtue, nor even form the design: every
pious

pious thought is thy gift and the effect of thy Son's passion. And what account must I render at thy tribunal, for having stifled so many inspirations, which prompted me to conquer my passions, and submit them to thy commands? My infidelities to thy Grace are without number, and thy mercy, that bears with me so long, above comprehension: all the good, that ever I have done, I wholly ascribe to thy Grace, O my Saviour! and all the sins, I have committed, to my infidelity. Thy divine assistance has never been wanting to me, but my co-operation to thy grace has often failed. I therefore confess thy goodness permits thee not to lay on thy creatures commands that are impossible, but that thou dost supply grace, to keep those precepts, which nature cannot: our disobedience, therefore, comes wholly from our corrupt nature, and our sins must lie at our own door, not at thine.

Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

St. Paul acknowledges here, that God is the Author, not only of all the good we receive for our own sanctification, but of all that regards the salvation of others. *He hath made us able ministers.* But how did he make them? Is it by the natural talents either of science or nobility? Or does he make those able ministers, who thrust themselves into holy orders, out of base and barren motives, to live in ease and plenty, not to labour for the conversion of souls. No, no; virtue is the accomplishment of a minister of the gospel; a zeal for God's glory; a contempt of his own; an assiduity in his duty without interruption, and an application to his charge without interest: he must practise himself what he teaches others, and edify by his

his example, as well as instruct by his exhortation.

These qualities fitted the apostles for the great employments they were rais'd to: with these they baffled the proud philosophers of the Gentiles; they subdued provinces, and even princes, to the gospel. O God, pour down thy Holy Spirit on those thou hast plac'd in the same dignity. Inspire them with the same zeal, and give their labour the same blessing. That they may be an honour to thy church, and may first sanctify themselves by a sincere practice of virtue, and then thy people by their instructions.

The apostle compares the priesthood of the old law with that of the new; and prefers this to the other. Its dignity is so great, that it obscures the very glory of *Moses*. For neither the priests, nor the old law, had power to give grace; but these of the new have received authority to remit sins; *whose sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them*, John xx. 23. Nothing gave the Jews a greater contempt of our Saviour's doctrine, than the obscurity of his Person. Nothing tied them more obstinately to their law, than the glory that accompanied their legislator. But exterior magnificence, tho' it dazzles the senses, adds nothing to dignity. Are not Christians subject to illusions, as well as the Jews? Are they not as often mistaken in their judgment? How often do we measure sanctity by the bare appearance, and canonize those, who are sheep without, and wolves within?

The gospel is the best rule to frame a judgment. Do they observe God's commands, and those of the church? Do they submit to the orders of their spiritual and temporal superiors? Is their zeal without fowness? their charity without partiality? Do they speak well of all, and ill of no body, but themselves? Are they more ready to pardon offences, than

to give any? to forget injuries, than to revenge them? Do they return good for evil, and prayers for maledictions? These are marks of a solid virtue, and a judgment, founded on them, is seldom erroneous.

But, O God! how can I judge of others, who am so great a stranger to my self? I leave my neighbour to thy tribunal, where he will find both justice and mercy; I acknowledge my self a sinner, and, tho' unworthy of pardon, I hope it from thy goodness.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. x. Verse

23. *And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.*

24. *For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

25. *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him,*

26. *What is written in the law? how readest thou?*

27. *And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thy self.*

28. *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: This do, and thou shalt live.*

29. *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*

30. *And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and*

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and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31. *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

32. *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*

33. *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him:*

34. *And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

35. *And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*

36. *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*

37. *And he said, He that shew'd mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour stiles his apostles happy, not barely because they saw him: for the greatest part of the kingdom partook of this favour. The Scribes and Pharisees, whose pride and hypocrisy he often condemned, not only saw his person, but admired his miracles, and heard his sermons; as well as the executioners, that crucified him, and the traitor that betrayed him: and yet our blessed Lord pronounced the sentence of his damnation,

damnation, *It had been better for that man if he had never been born.*

He therefore calls his apostles *blest*, not only because they saw him, but because they believed in him, and practis'd those maxims he delivered. It is a madness, at this time of day, to question his religion, confirm'd by the blood of so many martyrs, demonstrated by the pens of so many learned men, and supported by such a cloud of miracles. But then it is no less monstrous to believe all he has revealed, and to transgress all his commands. Yet this is the misfortune of the greatest part of Christians: what distance between our belief, and our actions? Who would think we had such a precept as *love your enemies*, when we even betray our friends; that we must *crucify our Flesh*, when we pamper it to excess: that we must lodge our hearts and treasures in heaven, when we lay up provisions for this world, without any care or solicitude for the next?

Alas! Faith alone will not convey us to heaven; it must be animated by good works, by a practice of Christ's morals: otherwise we shall undergo the sentence, pronounced by our Saviour against the servant, who knew his master's will, and neglected it; we shall be punish'd more than infidels, for having received more favours from God and abused them.

Thank therefore God every moment of your lives, for having called you to his holy religion, and resolve to live up to its maxims: wash out the stains of your past offences with tears of a sincere repentance; and edify those by your virtues, you have scandalized by your vices.

If you ask me, what you must do? I must return you the same answer our Saviour made the lawyer, in the passage before us: *How readest thou?* He answered *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with*
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all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thy self. This God commanded even in the old law, and Christ has made them the basis, and capital points, of the new : that is, You must prefer the observance of God's commands before all things: you must prefer his love before that of all creatures, tho' never so dear, never so beneficial. And this obligation takes in all times and all circumstances: prosperity must not throw you into a forgetfulness of him, nor adversity into murmurs against him: you must equally bless his conduct, when he takes away, and when he gives; and praise his providence, as well in sickness, as when you enjoy all the advantage of health; in short, you must submit your will, without a reserve, to his; desire nothing in this world but his favour, nor fear any thing but sin.

Oh! the thrice happy state of a soul thus in love with its Creator! It carries a heaven within itself; and enjoys a more refin'd pleasure, than all those sensible allurements, we pursue with so much eagerness, can give us. It has a kind of an assurance, whatever misery it groans under in this world, it shall be eternally happy in the next. And who can be miserable, that is always waited on by so comfortable a confidence?

It is impossible to love God, unless at the same time we love our neighbour: And this love must not only sit on our tongue, but lodge in our hearts: nor will an ordinary tenderness satisfy the obligation: it must equal the kindness we have for ourselves. Hence we must neither do him harm, nor even wish him any: we must excuse his failings, and bear with his weaknesses: we must neither touch his reputation, nor invade his goods: we must assist him in his necessities, protect him in danger, and comfort him in affliction. In short, we must *do by him, as*

we would be done by, were we in the same circumstances.

But, does the love, I bear my brethren, answer this strict obligation? Do I wish him no harm, when I take all advantages, to rise by his fall? to build my fortune on the ruin of his; and when, to satisfy my avarice, I invade his possessions? Do I excuse his failings, when I magnify them, and tear his reputation, to carry on a conversation, or content a passion? And yet, O God, how many are guilty of this conduct, opposite to all the maxims of thy gospel, and of nature?

Reflect, dear reader, if you are a Christian, that, by loving your brother, you reap the advantage; and, by hating him, a sad reversion of vengeance: for God has engaged his word, that he will treat us as we treat our brethren. The merciful will find mercy at his tribunal, and the revengeful punishment.

This lawyer, *willing to justify himself*, would know of our Saviour, who was his neighbour. Every man, Christ has redeemed with his precious blood, is your neighbour: the slave, at the oar, is neighbour to the prince on the throne: the lackey to his master, and the indigent, who wants all things, to him, who abounds in all things. The difference of states, cannot cut off the relation. And God send, that those, who look down upon the miserable not as their brethren, but as creatures of another species, are not forced, after their deaths, like the rich man in the gospel, to behold those poor Lazarus's, they despised here, seated in Abraham's bosom, and themselves lodg'd in hell.

Our Saviour answers the lawyer's question by a parable, and draws from it an argument to recommend, or rather to renew the command of charity.

A certain man, says he, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who strip him
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of his raiment, and wounded him, and departing left him half dead.

This unfortunate man represents, to the life, the deplorable condition of every sinner: they depart from Jerusalem, as well as he, that is, from the company of saints, who might have animated them to virtue by their words, and edified them by their example: they make their way to Jericho, where they see virtue in contempt, and vice in credit. And thus they expose themselves to temptations without number, to danger without end. These objects fire the passions; the devil enforces them, and by frequent attacks draws him into sin; this stabs mortally the sinner's soul, strips it of grace, and all those blessings it entitles him to. Oh! the sad effects of sin! What a train of miseries follow a short pleasure? To forfeit grace, God's friendship, heaven, an eternity of bliss, for a momentary satisfaction, nay, and to expose ourselves to all the torments of hell, has something so strange, that nothing but experience can convince us, that a reasonable creature is capable of so prodigious a folly. When temptation assails you, weigh what you lose by consenting, what you gain by a Christian resistance. You lose all title to heaven, and nothing but God's mercy, whom you offend, can restore it you again. Oh! what a gain on the one side! what a loss on the other!

A priest, and a Levite, find this poor wretch in this deplorable condition, naked, wounded, weltering in his gore, and brought to his last agony: yet, not touch'd by such a moving spectacle, they go on their way, without offering any succour to the poor creature in this extremity. Are we now, tho' Christians, more charitable than the priest and Levite? Do we not behold our brethrens miseries with as little concern? Do we not often refuse the small relief of a penny, to assuage his want,

want, and will not stretch our hand to raise him from his forlorn condition? Yet we profess a law, that not only recommends charity, but obliges us to practise it; that promises to restore, in heaven, a hundred-fold, whatever we lay out upon our distressed brethren on earth. Oh! at how cheap a rate may we buy heaven! Certainly it is worth not only an alms, but a thousand worlds. Do we not deserve to lose it, if we refuse so small a trifle to purchase it?

A Samaritan, that is, a man of another religion, a schismatick, and heretick, passed the same way: the sad and unexpected spectacle moved him to compassion. He draws near the expiring patient; he dresses his bleeding wounds; and, not content with this charitable office, he recommends him to the care of another, and promises to bear all the expences of his recovery.

Our Saviour has, in this parable, drawn a scheme of christian charity, and recommends it to his followers, with the greatest emphasis imaginable. He teaches first, that no difference of religion, no animosity, no interest excuse us. The Samaritan, who did the charitable office, was a schismatick; the wounded person a Jew: and there was such a division between these two people, that they would have no commerce one with the other. Regard not therefore the religion of a distressed brother, but his want; and proportion your charity to his necessity, and your own ability. Secondly, He teaches us, not only to drop a transient alms for a present relief, but to take care for the future, as much as our circumstances will permit. The Samaritan was not content to bind up his wounds; he provided for his cure. He laid down money for the present expence, and promised to reimburse all, at his return, for the future. This is to carry charity

to its perfection, but not beyond the bounds Christ prescribes.

Love your neighbour as yourself, says our blessed Saviour: I am not his disciple unless I do. I am not a Christian, unless I assist him. If I hate my brother, God will hate me. If I excuse his failings, God will excuse mine; and if I pardon an injury, God will pardon my sins. For he has declared, we shall receive the same treatment from him, our brethren receive from us. Interest therefore obliges us, as well as duty, to love and cherish our neighbour; to be tender of his reputation; to bury in silence those failings we cannot excuse; to pardon all injuries, and forget them.

Oh! how far has my practice swerved from my duty! Have I not transgress'd this great law of charity in almost every point? Instead of excusing my neighbour's faults, have I not even condemned his virtues, and given a malicious turn to his most innocent actions? Charity commands me not to mention even his publick crimes; yet I have revealed his most secret mis-carriages, and have made them the subject of my diversion and raillery. Like the Priest and Levite in the gospel, I have pass'd by my wounded brother without concern, and rather widened his wounds by insult and outrage, than closed them by mercy and pity.

O God! treat me not with that severity, I have treated my distress'd brethren: I confess I have transgress'd my duty to them, and the law of charity you have imposed upon me. But I promise, for the future, to lay down all aversion, to hate no body, but to love all for your sake, who have redeemed them with your most precious blood, and entitled them to your glory.

EPISTLE to the Galatians, Chap. iii. Verse

16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.

17. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19. Wherefore then serveth the law? it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

21. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

22. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

The MORAL REFLECTION.

SOME innovations had raised dissenters among the converts of Galatia, and persuaded many, that the observation of the old law was sufficient for salvation; and that the embracing of the gospel did not take away the obligation of submitting to all the ceremonies and precepts of

Moses. And altho' the apostle had taught them the contrary, and confirmed his doctrine with miracles ; yet false teachers arose, and vented their errors, which several embraced, in opposition to St. Paul, with eagerness, and defended with heat and passion.

If there arose heresies and schisms in the times of the apostles, what wonder there are so many in ours ! But as St. Paul called the Galatians mad, *O foolish Galatians*, for abandoning the faith he taught, to follow the prophane notions of upstart preachers ; so those of our days are no less blameable, who run after every new doctrine, however opposite to that of Christ.

To disabuse the Galatians, as to the sufficiency of the Mosaic law for salvation ; and to prove the necessity of the gospel, the apostle tells them, *To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* The promise therefore God made to Abraham, in reward of his faith and obedience, was, that all nations should be blessed by Jesus Christ ; and that the inheritance of heaven is not the simple price of the observance of the Mosaic law, but a mere gratuity founded on the promise God made to Abraham, to give the world a Messias (a Redeemer) who, by his death, would cancel all the sins of the world, and intitle all, that believed in him, to the inheritance of heaven. For if *the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise.*

Oh ! what an honour to Abraham, that the expected Messias should be born of his race ! But what a favour, that God should send his only Son to redeem mankind from the slavery of sin, and the bondage of Satan ! We were all lost, and nothing could relieve us, but God's
goodness,

goodness, which we had abused by the highest ingratitude: we deserved nothing at his hands, but the punishment due to our offences. But he cast an eye of mercy on us, and sent a Redeemer, not only to deliver us by his death, but to instruct us by his life. What gratitude ought we to return the Father for sending his Son? What love to the Son, for taking upon him so hard a precept? He gain'd nothing by our salvation: he lost nothing by our damnation. He was infinitely happy before we were, and would continue in that happy state, tho' we returned to our first nothing. Ought we not therefore to consecrate to his honour, every member of our bodies, every power of our souls? We are his by a thousand titles; and consequently should live only to him. But, Oh! by a strange injustice, we live for every thing but him. We divide our hearts and our time among the creatures, and wholly forget God the Creator. Interest, pleasure, and ambition run away with our hearts, and our time: to these idols we sacrifice all that is most dear, a happy eternity, that contains all that is good, all that is desirable: and we expose ourselves to the utmost rigour of everlasting torments. Oh! my Lord and my God, withdraw my heart from all wordly pleasures, that have nothing amiable but the name, nothing charming but the appearance. Fix it wholly on thee: in thy service alone it can find content, and preserve its innocence.

If the inheritance of heaven was given us, not by the law, but by the merits of the Messias; St. Paul asks, why the law was given, and he answers; *It was added because of transgressions.*

Some take from this passage occasion to accuse God of cruelty, as if he made the Jewish law,

law, merely that the faithful might sin; but such a thought can only come from an atheist, who denies a God, or a devil, who hates him. God, who is all goodness, cannot impose a law on creatures without enabling them to observe it. He cannot bind them up to impossibilities, nor punish them for transgressions they had no power to avoid.

It is true, by virtue precisely of the law, neither heaven nor grace were promised; but both were included in the promise of a Messias made to Abraham. In view of whose future merits, God gave the Jews grace to observe the law, and heaven as a recompence of their virtues.

No, no, O God! thou dost not treat us, as the Egyptians did thy people, with cruelty and tyranny. When thou dost command us to work, thou dost furnish us with materials, and supplies, to execute thy commands. The fault must lie at our door, not at thine, if we transgress thy law; which is only hard, because we are idle. Our passions carry us to sensualities and disorders, and we will not take the pains to strive against the torrent; nor exert our strength to withstand their violence: we are the sole cause of our own miscarriage; our corrupt nature defeats the designs of thy goodness; and the greatest part, even of Christians, are damned, because they will not be saved: they refuse thy gracious assistance, and give up all right to heaven for criminal satisfactions on earth.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xvii. Verse

11. *And it came to pass as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.*

12. *And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers which stood afar off:*

13. *And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus Master, have mercy upon us.*

14. *And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew your selves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed.*

15. *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.*

16. *And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.*

17. *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?*

18. *There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*

19. *And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

JESUS was always travelling from place to place; but he dropt as many favours, as he took steps; wherever he past, he cured the sick, and delivered those he found possess'd by the devil. In the passage before us, we are told, he met ten lepers in the way: they were forbid by the law to enter into towns, or to converse with any, lest they should spread the infection, and communicate their distemper to others. Such a

care had God even of the bodily health of his people.

But he would teach us, besides, another important lesson, that we must not frequent the company and conversation of the wicked; because their vices are no less catching, than the plague or the leprosy. A philosopher had reason to answer one, who ask'd him what kind of man such a one was; *Tell me what company he keeps.* He meant, that, if he convers'd with the virtuous, in all probability he was virtuous; but, if he haunted the conversation of the wicked, he was assuredly vicious.

God forbid the Jews to have any commerce with infidels; and the reason was, because they would certainly debauch them by their example: But interest had more sway with them, than so severe a prohibition. So that they mix'd with idolaters; and immediately took up their vices, and embraced their religion.

Ah! could we ask the damned, what was the cause of their ruin, the greatest part of those unfortunate creatures would answer, *Bad company.* Had they avoided sinners, they had either lived innocent, or died repentant. But their conversation taught them crimes, which they did not know, and their example encouraged them to commit all those abominations they had learnt.

We frequent most those we love, and love moves us to imitate them. If therefore you converse with the wicked, you either are a sinner, or soon will become one.

Ah! tell me not, tho' you love their company, you hate their vices: but will you continue in the same disposition? Alas! we have a strong inclination to evil; and the occasion to commit a sin is generally too strong for our resolutions to practise virtue: it is certain, without
grace,

grace, we cannot resist a great temptation, and it is presumption to expect it, whilst we remain in the way of temptation. Now, it is certain, bad company is such: example gives credit to the worst of crimes, and makes them fashionable, nay, and almost lawful too: persuasions will enforce the temptation, and when all these conspire with flesh and blood, and the devil is of the confederacy, what can be expected but wickedness?

But, perchance, you may overcome these temptations: perchance you may; but it is a thousand to one you will not; and will you venture your innocence, and heaven also, upon a bare perchance, at so great odds? One may eat with lepers, and converse with those, that are struck with the plague, and perchance receive no harm by either; yet no body will try the experiment, nor venture his life upon a possibility of escaping.

Why then, O Christians, will you expose your soul to a danger, you dare not expose your body to? Is the death of that a greater evil than of this? Our blessed Saviour commands you to fly from all things that draw you to sin, tho' never so dear; nay, to pluck out your eyes. Does any company come so near you, as your own members? Is any friendship so necessary? Leave therefore, dear Christian, those conversations that are infectious; and break off with those you must not imitate. Contract no friendship with those that are enemies to God; that pawn their souls for a vain pleasure, and will certainly decoy you into the same folly. What do you fear? to displease those who dare displease God? You should rather fear to please those, who laugh at innocence, and glory in their crimes.

But their entertainment is diverting. Is it then so great a diversion to a Christian, to see his Creator offended every moment? to hear his holy name blasphemed? and the very Person of our Saviour crucified

cified once again with oaths and imprecations? If you are so disposed you will certainly follow their example; there is but one step from the approbation of a crime to the committing it.

These lepers stood at a distance: the law forbade them to enter into towns, or to converse with any, lest they should communicate their distemper: they obeyed the law. God forbids you to scandalize your neighbour by your sinful conduct; and tells you, it were better for you to be cast into the sea with a mill-stone about your neck, than to draw your brother into sin: and he adds a severe *Woe to the person by whom the offence cometh*, Matth. xviii. 7. And yet how frequently is this precept transgressed? Is not your example oftentimes a lesson of vice to your children and domesticks? Oh! what an account will those parents and masters of families render to God, who teach young children sins they should never know, and animate them to commit them in time by their example. A child's memory is tenacious, and seldom forgets the first impressions; when they come to riper years, they remember what they saw in their infancy, and think it lawful to follow the example their parents have left them. If you will sin, and damn your self, let your disorders at least be private, and draw not your inferiors into the same desperate resolution. Their souls cost our blessed Saviour dear; a laborious life, and a cruel death.

So soon as the lepers saw our Saviour, they cried out, *Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us*. What drew them to Jesus, but a desire to be healed of their infirmity? Had they not fallen into that distemper, perchance they had never known him, nor implored his Divine Assistance: their disease was beneficial to them: their confidence in our Saviour's power and goodness procured health to their bodies, and perhaps to their souls also.

We

We may draw from hence a motive to bear all our infirmities with patience, and resignation to Providence. Good God! how many has sickness saved, whom health would have damned? Whilst we feel no pain, no uneasiness within us, we place our happiness in the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life, without any thoughts of the other: we live, in fine, as if we were never to die, or never to revive. We esteem nothing but what flatters sense, and give ourselves up to the government of our unruly passions; but when infirmities assail us, when no art of physicians is able to divert our pain, or give us a moment of ease; oh! then we change our opinion of all those transitory pleasures that enslaved us. We perceive this world is but a passage, either to an eternity of happiness or misery. And then, if we have the least tincture of religion, we prepare our selves for heaven, by a sincere repentance.

It is true, many suffer their infirmities, as the damned do their torments, with curses and imprecations; but the favour is not less, because we abuse it: the fault lies on our side, who turn the antidote into poison, and the best remedy against sin, into murmurs against providence for preventing it.

Say therefore, with resignation, Oh my Redeemer, I have long abused my health by offending thee. I deserve to be deprived of the blessing: I resign my self to thy will, and only desire thy assistance, to turn it to the profit of my soul: I know I must suffer for my sins, either in this life or the next: oh! spare me in eternity, and torment me in time: let me suffer here, as thy child and friend, not hereafter, eternally, as thy enemy.

Our Saviour would not heal them on the spot; but ordered them to repair to the priests. *Go, shew your selves to the priests.* But, O wonder! whilst

whilst they were on their way, they found themselves cured. But why did our blessed Lord send them to the priests? In compliance with the Jewish law, which he came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

But now, behold a miracle of ingratitude, almost as great as that of the cure! of the ten, one alone returned to thank our Saviour, and he a stranger. *Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found, that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*

This is our Saviour's complaint: has he not as much reason to reproach us, dear Christians, with our ingratitude, as the nine lepers with theirs? How many favours have we received from his bounty? how many graces? Of a thousand, have we seriously returned him thanks for one? When we stood on the precipice of sin, and by consequence of damnation, how often has he with-held us? nay, how often has he raised us to life, when we were dead to him and heaven, by the sinful disorders of our lives? Have we acknowledged the favour? have we thank'd our Benefactor?

Oh! ungrateful creature that I am! instead of thanks, Almighty God! I return thee affronts! and employ those very favours, thou bestowest on me for thy glory and my salvation, to thy dishonour and my damnation. For the future, by the assistance of thy grace, I will not only thank thee with words, but with my whole heart: I will praise thy mercies, and obey thy commands.

EPISTLE to the Galatians, Chap. v. Ver.

16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the flesh.*

17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

18. *But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

19. *Now the Works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,*

20. *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

21. *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they, which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

22. *But the fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

23. *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE Apostle exhorts the Galatians to follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit, not the inclination of flesh: *that* leads us to virtue, *this* to pleasure; that is, the one conveys us to heaven, the other to our everlasting misery. All our happiness depends on our obedience to the call, and inspiration of the Divine Spirit, and all our misfortune

fortune comes from our compliance with the inclinations of our corrupt nature.

But, alas! the flesh and the Spirit are adversaries: they are continually at variance; they fight one against the other; and this domestic and civil war only ends with our lives. There is no hope of a peace, nor even of a truce, till death puts an end to the quarrel, and our flesh lies in the grave.

This contest fills our imagination with strange ideas of virtue: it persuades us, if we intend to practise it, we must bid farewell to all satisfaction, and never expect one moment of content or pleasure. But, oh my soul, can this be true? Oughtest thou not to give up all right to the least satisfaction in this life, for an eternity of happiness in the other? Tho' thou didst hang on a rack forty years; what proportion between this torment, and an everlasting joy in heaven!

But virtue is not so void of pleasure, as corrupt nature and the devil represent it. Ask the saints, who practised it, and they will tell thee, on their own experience, nothing is more sweet, nothing more pleasant. *St. Paul* assures us, in the midst of his labours, and persecutions from Jews, Gentiles, and false brethren, he was replenished with joy. And is it not worth while to make a trial? Does the difficulty deter men from the enterprize, when there appears a prospect of gain? yet what they pursue is inconsiderable, and uncertain: but endeavour to be virtuous seriously, and you cannot miscarry. The success depends on your will, assisted by God's grace; and this will not be wanting: the recompence will be a peace of conscience here, and an eternal happiness hereafter.

The apostle gives a long catalogue of the works of the flesh, and, at the end, threatens hell and damnation to those that practise them: *Adultery, fornication,*

fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they, who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Do all those sins exclude from heaven? Not always; as some small dissensions, a light motion of anger, jealousy, or envy. But they are mortal, when they arrive to such a degree, as to extinguish charity. However, they are, even in this circumstance, tho' venial, yet real offences against his Divine Majesty. And this very thought should keep Christians within the bounds of peace, who have received from their Redeemer so many exhortations; nay, so severe commands to live in union and amity one with another.

But all acts of impurity are mortal, and the guilty are liable to those pains St. Paul threatens. Yet, O God! who would think there was such a precept, that misery, diseases, and beggary punished the delinquents in this world, and hell in the next? This unfortunate sin damns the greatest part of mankind; notwithstanding the custom and frequency of it, all are ashamed of it. God once punished it with an universal deluge; he consumed five cities with fire and brimstone, and it has drawn down from heaven almost all the publick calamities on mankind, from the beginning of the world. Yet, in spite of all the chastisements in this world, and of threats of eternal torments in the next, men plunge into this vice, as if there were no prohibition. O dear Christians! act a little like men, and follow not, like beasts, the impulse of sense and passion. Weigh seriously what you expect from this offence, and what in reason you ought to fear. You can expect nothing but a short pleasure, followed

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lowed by a long remorse: with reason you ought to fear the loss of heaven and the torments of hell. Both which are generally the doom of those, who remain habitually in this unfortunate disorder. It is hard to shake off an ill habit of any kind. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it, Prov. xxii. 6.* Those habits, we contract in our youth, accompany us to our old age, and only leave us, when we leave the world: but of all, this sticks the closest to us; and nothing but an extraordinary grace can move us to a sincere repentance: it renders us stupid and insensible: it stifles not only all sentiments of piety, but of religion; and you will scarce find one atheist, who was not guilty of this vice, before he denied his Creator. Resist therefore the first temptation: when once you are engaged, a return is hard. It is easier far to overcome the temptation, than to leave the sin.

Never rely on your own strength: ask grace with humility and perseverance. This must be your support: from this you must hope for victory: fly the occasion, if you intend to stand secure, and cast not a glance on an object that awakens your passion. The poison enters through the eyes into the heart, and this soon catches the infection. And, if this once yields, you are undone: nothing can rescue you from an eternal misery, but a sincere repentance. And this is extremely hard, or at least not secure, unless followed by a sincere repentance. Why therefore, O foolish Christian! do you expose your salvation to the greatest hazard for a moment's satisfaction? Is there any proportion between eternity, and an instant? between torments that never end, and a transient pleasure?

As the fruits of the flesh lead to damnation, so those of the Spirit lead to heaven, and the apostle specifies them as follows: *The fruit of the Spirit,*

is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. To the practice of these the apostle exhorts the Galatians, as strict obligations.

Love is the queen of virtues, and it has two branches: one regards God, the other our neighbour. We must love God with all our hearts, and with all our souls: we must prefer him before all creatures, and rather choose to break with them, than to offend him. For this end alone we were placed in this world: we were created to serve and love him here, and to enjoy him eternally in heaven hereafter. This is the sole end of our creation, and consequently ought to be our whole employment. Time was given us, to gain a happy eternity: and, if we fall short of this, tho' we gain the whole world, it will avail us nothing. But, if we purchase heaven, tho' we lose all here, we are made for ever. Play not then away your time in vain and childish amusements; doat not upon creatures, but give your heart to God who made it. This he requires, and he alone is able to satisfy it.

O God, thy greatness and goodness oblige me to love thee, as well as my own interest. In thee are centred all the perfections I admire in creatures: thy bounty is as infinite as thy power: when I was nothing, thou didst give me a rational being, an understanding to know, and a will to love thee. Thou didst raise me to a supernatural end, and didst wash out my offences with the last drop of thy precious blood: thou hast called me to thy holy religion, whilst millions die in infidelity, and by the washing of baptism didst receive me into thy Church, and made me heir to heaven and child of the most High. Thou hast revealed to me thy commandments, and dost daily furnish me with grace to observe them: these favours call for an acknowledgment, and what can I return but my heart,

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my love, and all the powers of my soul? I live by thy power: I will, for the future, only live for thy service; to acknowledge my ingratitude, and thy goodness; to deplore my sins, and to pay obedience to thy commands.

When the apostle places joy among the fruits of the Divine Spirit, he means not that, which flows from the satisfaction of sense, but from a more sublime cause; from the testimony of a good conscience, and the practice of virtue. This is the gift of God, and the ordinary recompence of piety in this world: it surpasses all the pleasures, sinners receive from their disorders, and is never followed by repentance. It is a continual banquet, which neither gluts nor surfeits. Oh! what a transport must this thought raise; that, if I die this instant, I shall enjoy that glory, my God and my Redeemer purchased for me, at the expence of his most sacred blood. I have endeavoured to answer the end of my creation and redemption, and have made use of creatures, as steps to heaven, not as weights to plunge me into hell. Such a thought must needs throw a soul into an extasy of joy, that has a true idea of that happiness God has prepared, in the next world, for those who love and serve him in this: if a friend unexpectedly leaves us an estate, good God! what raptures of joy does the news raise in us? and yet, tho' it were an empire, what comparison between that and heaven? It may be wrested from us either by force or treachery; at least once we must leave it; for nothing passes with us into the next world, but our virtues and vices. But heaven is eternal, and its joys everlasting; they are not subject to chance, and are out of the reach of accidents. Try at least, by a regular and virtuous life, whether piety be not more satisfactory than vice: it is certainly worth the experiment.

Peace

Peace is another fruit of the Holy Spirit; and, as it regards our selves, it is the effect of a good conscience. When this flies not in our face, nor raises storms and disorders in our breast, we enjoy that peace the apostle mentions, and our Saviour left his disciples, and all the future faithful, that imitated their example: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* John xiv. 27.

But, to maintain this peace with your neighbour, speak nothing that may offend him, or hurt your self. Touch not his faults, tho' publick; for tho' you commit, in this case, nothing against justice, you offend against charity. Bear his defects without anger or impatience: if passion seizes the heart, ill language will break out from the tongue. Fly raillery as the plague of conversation, and the bane of peace: those that can bear even a satire, will not endure raillery; a joke is more sensible to most men than a reproach; for that seems to suspect our wit. And such is our pride, that we had rather be esteemed reprobates, than fools. If therefore you intend to keep peace with your neighbour, be civil without affectation, familiar without rudeness; praise his virtue with prudence; but never talk of his defects.

Oh! what a heavenly sight is it, to see neighbours live peaceably together. It opens a delightful prospect even to angels, and has a shadow of heaven; where all the saints enjoy a perfect calm, and have no other mind, no other will, but that of God. Nothing, my Jesus, is able to favour us with such a divine blessing, but thy grace: instill it into our hearts, that we may feel the effects of it here, and receive the recompence hereafter.

Long-suffering, or patience, is a Christian virtue, and, as St. Paul teaches, a necessary means to obtain

tain the glory Christ promises those that follow him : *For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise*, Heb. x. 36. In what station soever we are placed, occasions offer themselves to practise this virtue. Sometimes we are tortured in body, sometimes in mind : sometimes malice attacks our fame ; injustice, our estate : poverty oppresses us, and misery casts us almost into despair. In these cases, a Christian must turn necessity into a virtue, and bear, with resignation to Providence, what he cannot avoid. Nothing happens without God's permission, and he permits nothing but for our good ; either to punish our sins here, that he may spare us hereafter, or to give a lustre to our virtues. What a folly therefore is it to spurn at Providence, to murmur at our Creator, and to blaspheme his name ? Do these impieties better your condition, or assuage your sufferings ? No : they augment your misery by encreasing your sins, and kindle a fire to torment you in hell.

Submit therefore to God's holy will, if not with joy, at least with submission : and, seeing your innocent Saviour could not enter into his glory without suffering, expect not a greater privilege.

Modesty is a Christian virtue, and a fruit of the Holy Ghost ; it regulates not only our exterior, but our interior also ; our voice, our tongue, and all the defects that spring from the agitation of our passions. It renders us not only grateful to God, but also pleasing and acceptable to our neighbour : to practise it, avoid indecency in your discourse, and affectation in your behaviour : be civil to all, but flatter no body : bear a contradiction without concern, and, if prudence or charity require a reply, return reason, not passion. Retrench all luxury in your cloaths and equipage ; let them suit with your state, not with the rule of vanity :
nothing

nothing makes a greater impression on men, than a Christian behaviour, calm and uniform; nor engages them more to praise God, and love virtue: it endears us to our friends, and draws esteem from our enemies. So that we receive applause from men, and shall receive an eternal reward from God.

In a word, those that belong to Christ, *have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* This is the mark the apostle gives, to distinguish the disciples of Christ from those of the world. If you have followed the stream of your passions, courted pleasure, and regulated your conduct by the maxims of flesh and blood, you belong to the world, long since condemned by the mouth of our Saviour. But if you have avoided all these objects that may endanger your innocence, if you have mortified the flesh, to keep it in subjection, and confined your desires within the compass of your duty, you are Christ's. Mortification is the way, that has led all the saints to heaven.

O Divine Spirit! give me strength to walk in the way of thy commandments: without thy assistance, I am not able to make one step towards my salvation. Either quell the rebellion of my sinful flesh, or give me grace to overcome it. Give me a true sense of my duty, of thy favours, and of my ingratitude: that, being ashamed of this, and confounded at those, for the future I may love nothing but thee, and fear nothing but to offend thee.

GOSPEL of St. Matthew, Chap. vi. Verse

24. *No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

25. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment ?*

26. *Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they ?*

27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?*

28. *And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin.*

29. *And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

30. *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?*

31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or what shall we drink ? or wherewithal shall we be clothed ?*

32. *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

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The MORAL REFLECTION.

IN this passage, our blessed Saviour exhorts his disciples to withdraw their affections from things of this world, to employ their time and thoughts in the purchase of virtue; and he promises heaven for their reward in the next world, and the good things of this life, in the present: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

He confutes a maxim, in the first place, that the Jews followed in his time, and is embraced by many Christians in ours: that men may love the world, and God, at the same time; that they may serve the one without displeasing the other. *No man can serve two masters.* And the reason is, because their maxims are quite opposite: Christ commands humility, pardon of injuries, self-denial, mortification. The world laughs at humility as a vice, and esteems pride a virtue; it preaches up revenge, and stigmatizes pardon as the effect of a base mind. It places happiness in the satisfactions of sense. What possibility of reconciling principles so contrary? Humility cannot stand with pride, nor pardon with revenge; I cannot practise self-denial in all things, and seek my ease; nor at once gratify my senses, and mortify them.

Seeing therefore, O my soul, thou canst not serve God and the world; into whose service wilt thou enter? Canst thou ballance one moment upon the choice? Who deserves the heart, but he who made it? but he alone who is able to content it? But labouring for the world, what wilt thou find but anguish and vanity? but a vain pleasure and a real misery? Why therefore do I tire my self in the pursuit of temporal goods? false and deceitful goods, which have nothing durable, but the regret

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for having abused them ! Why don't I turn my thoughts and my care towards heaven, towards those goods, that are everlasting, and which alone can satisfy my desires ?

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Our Saviour does not say, the possession of riches is incompatible with the service of God ; for how many are there in the world, who join great virtues with plentiful estates ? whose purses are always open to the poor ; and whose charity succours the indigent ? But he says, You cannot serve God and riches : you may possess them, but you must not be possess'd by them : you must not turn them into an idol, nor so tie your affection to them, as to transgress God's laws, and break through all the bounds of justice, to procure or preserve them. As God permits poverty, so he created riches ; and consequently they are good in themselves, tho' bad by the ill use we turn them to.

Pray, therefore, neither for poverty, nor wealth ; both extremes are dangerous : lay up treasures in heaven, which can neither be consumed by moths, nor stoln by thieves : there you will enjoy them eternally, without envy, without care, or solicitude. But you must leave behind palaces, lordships, and all you possess'd here. And what will remain, but a mortal sorrow for having laid out all the precious moments of your life, on things, that deserve no thought but of contempt ?

Withdraw, O God, my heart from all wordly allurements, that cannot render me happy in this world, and will probably make me miserable in the next. I shall be rich, if I possess thy grace ; and poor, tho' on a throne without it.

After that our blessed Saviour had condemned the love of the world, he blames the solicitude and uneasiness about those things that are necessary, as a defect of confidence in divine providence, and
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of submission to his orders. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.*

He condemns not a reasonable care for our temporal concerns, nor a moderate application to them, according to the rules of the gospel. Nay, he commands it; for to expect, that God shall provide us all necessities, without our concurrence, is not confidence in his providence, but presumption. But he forbids inquietude and anxiety, when we have done our duty, which is vain and unprofitable: for by our anxious cares and chagrins, it is no more possible for us to procure necessities, than to add a cubit to our stature. *Which of you, by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?*

When you have done your part, leave the event to Providence. *The fowls of the air neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet God feeds them all.* And can we think he will forget us, made in his image, and redeem'd by his blood? *Are ye not much better than they?* He cloathes the lilies in more glorious robes, than those of Solomon. And if he be so profuse in his bounty to flowers, that shine to day, and to-morrow will be cast into the fire; will he abandon us, whom he has destined to live eternally with him in heaven?

O my Saviour and my God! your reasons convince me of folly and infidelity, if I abandon not myself to your providence, and at the same time persuade me it is by your command. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and every part of the creation, give me the resolution to cast my self into the arms of your divine providence, and to trust you with all my concerns. You are infinitely rich, you can supply all

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all my necessities ; you are my Father, I know you will ; unless I render myself unworthy of your bounty, by my sins and diffidence.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you : our first care must be to serve God, and to save our souls ; this is the principal ; temporal things are mere accessories. God placed us in this world, merely to serve him here, and to enjoy him eternally hereafter. This is the end of every man : the slave at the oar, and the emperor on the throne, have no other business, but to serve their Creator, and to save their souls. All other affairs are insignificant, unless they tend to this end. It is the one thing necessary. This is our great affair ; an eternity of pleasure will be our reward, if we manage it well ; and of misery, if ill. It is our only affair ; for we have nothing else to do, but to love God, and place our souls in as great security, as this dangerous world will permit us. And yet, O God ! who would think Christians had the least tincture of this belief ? Who would not think, they persuaded themselves, they should die like beasts, they live so like them ? Do they not employ all their thoughts on things of this world, without casting an eye on the future ? Examine their conduct ; view their employments ; and you will find all tends to grandeur, pleasure and interest. These take up our thoughts ; these run away with our time, and captivate our hearts : and if we pray, or perform any christian duty, it is only when we have nothing else upon our hands, or when we are tired in the pursuit of vain amusements. So that we only think of God, and our souls, merely to avoid idleness. Yet, dear Christian, this is thy great affair ; thy only affair : nothing deserves thy thoughts, but this :
nothing

nothing thy care, but this. Why therefore art thou so sollicitous about thy temporal concerns? why so supinely negligent in those that are eternal?

Ask a Christian, if he intends to save his soul, he will answer, yes: in the mean time not one of a thousand takes the way that leads to heaven.

* *From whence comes this accursed security?* cries out St. Bernard. On what do you ground your hope? You live among a thousand enemies, who labour to ensnare you; why then are you so supinely careless? so dangerously secure? Why do you not open as many eyes, to avoid their snares, as they lay baits to surprise you? Alas! Ease and pleasure raise such mists, you cannot see the precipice under your feet.

Take then a resolution to shake off this careless humour; fly from the world, as Lot did from Sodom, unless you intend to be involved in its ruin; that is, abjure its principles, cast not an eye back on that accursed region, condemned by our Saviour, (*wo to the world!*) lest, with Lot's wife, you pay for your curiosity, and stand a perpetual monument to all posterity of human folly, and of divine justice. Have pity of your soul, or else God will have none; nor does that man deserve any pity from another, who is so unnaturally cruel, as to allow himself none. When you rise, when you go to bed, ask yourselves this short question: Am I not made for heaven? and, if I miss of this, shall I not take up my eternal abode in hell? Alas! yes: What then have I done, to purchase so great a happiness? Nothing. What have I done to incur so superlative a misery? All things. If I die in the

* *Unde hæc maledicta securitas? via impiorum tenebrosa, & non respiciunt ubi corruunt.* S. Bern.

present

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present state, I am lost, and accurs'd for ever ; if I deplore my past errors and detest them by a hearty repentance, I am for ever made : shall I then be so foolish, as to turn obstinacy into a piece of gallantry ? as to continue in sin, to avoid the brand of inconstancy ? No, no ; I will not lose my soul for a vain punctilio. Oh ! that we could spend some moments on these considerations ; we should set a greater price on our souls, and take more pains to save them : we should obey our Saviour's command, and seek the kingdom of God, before we thought of making any provision here below.

Nay, God has engaged his word, to provide me necessities here, if I employ my care to lay up treasures in heaven. Cannot we rely on the promise of truth itself ? Can we have a better security ? Why then do we harraßs our bodies with labour, our thoughts with sollicitudes for our temporal interest, when God so solemnly charges himself with it ? Where is our faith ? Where our confidence ? He is Omnipotent, he can keep his promise ; he is Truth, and will.

Take away, my God, the love of my body, which once will fall to dust in spite of doctors and remedies ; and inspire me with a sincere concern for my soul ; which has cost thee the labours of a painful life, and the shame of an ignominious death.

EPISTLE

EPISTLE to the Galat. Chap. v. and vi. Verse

25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

26. *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.*

2. *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

3. *For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

4. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

5. *For every man shall bear his own burden.*

6. *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.*

7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

8. *For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

9. *And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

BE *not desirous of vain glory*, says the apostle to the Galatians ; that is, lay aside all desire to raise yourself above your neighbour. Court not the applause of men, which cannot add one grain to your merit. It is certain, this passion is vain, as well as the esteem it effects : and yet it runs in the blood of all men : desire of esteem is the first passion that appears in us, and the last that leaves us. No vice is more foolish, nor more unreasonable : how do men doat on their wit, and women on their beauty ? With what contempt do they look upon those who have less ? Now what reason have such people to be vain ? Did they procure these gifts by their merits ? Alas ! we owe them wholly to the goodness of our Creator, who gave us these advantages above our neighbour. They are therefore merely the effects of his liberality, not of our deserts.

Has a beggar reason to be vain, or to desire esteem, because he has received a greater alms than his companions ? Ought he not rather to thank the giver, than to pride in the gift, and to consider, his misery procured the alms, not his merits ?

O my Maker ! I had no right to be, much less to be witty or beautiful, or to be endowed with any extraordinary gift of nature. Thou might'st have let me sleep eternally in my bed of nothing ; or have made me as full of ulcers as a Lazarus, as poor and as deformed as Job on the dunghill, and as void of reason, as a child in the cradle. My endeavour shall be to thank thee daily for thy favours ; to employ my natural talents to thy glory, not to purchase a vain reputation.

If

If vain-glory be in itself frivolous, it is dangerous in its effects: for it is the source of envy and jealousy; and from these spring the greatest crimes. *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.* Nothing more opposite to charity, nothing more contrary to union, than these. An envious man seldom keeps his passion within his own breast: his tongue discovers the passion of his heart; it breaks out into detraction and calumny, and even misrepresents the most innocent actions as criminal; and thus he breaks the laws both of charity and justice; sows discord, and kindles feuds and animosities.

But, why do you envy your neighbour? Is it because God has favoured him with more natural advantages than you? But why must your eye be evil, because God's is good? Is he not master of his own goods? Why therefore may he not dispose of them as he pleases? He does you no injustice, by being liberal to another. Nor can your neighbour commit any offence against you by receiving a favour, that was not in his power to refuse. Enjoy with thankfulness those gifts of nature, your Maker has bestowed upon you; employ them to his glory and your own salvation, and neither quarrel, nor repine at the distribution.

Do you envy his station, the goods of fortune he possesses, his reputation? If he has built his grandeur upon injustice, and purchased wealth and honour by crimes, he deserves rather pity than envy; for he has sold his title to heaven, and his soul for trifles, that once he must abandon; that cannot satisfy him, even when he has them, and will torment him at parting, and perchance eternally also.

If

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If he has raised his fortune by honourable and christian means, what does it concern you? Because God has prospered his endeavours, why must you repine? Would you be greater, if he were less? Christ commands you *to love your neighbour as yourself*, and consequently to rejoyce at his prosperity, as much as at your own. Why then do you transgress this command, which neither brings you profit nor pleasure, but a continual torment? Other sins give some satisfaction to sense; but envy and jealousy put you on the rack, and only serve to render you miserable. Envy therefore no man's happiness; for if you do, you will certainly lose your own; a hundred vipers will gnaw your heart, and consume all content: and whilst you fancy your neighbour has too much, you will enjoy nothing.

If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou be also tempted.

The apostle here tells us the obligation we have to correct our brethren, if by surprise they fall into any fault: it is hard to manage correction right; and much harder to receive it well. First, You must have a heart full of love and tenderness for him who is fallen.

Secondly, Let your remonstrance breathe lenity and sweetness; and let not a word slip from your mouth, that savours of passion or harshness; hard words may raise anger, but not repentance.

Thirdly, Represent his duty in private. Publick reprehensions, tho' well intended, are always taken ill, and generally provoke a sinner to commit new faults, but never persuade him to correct an old one. Fourthly, Shew no surprize at his fall, lest God permit you to fall into the same sin, and teach you not to wonder at another's

other's weakness, by shewing you your own. Alas! we are all weak: the greatest saints are guilty of small sins, and capable of committing the greatest; and, if they fall not, they must give all the glory to God's grace, not to their own strength.

Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. We are all of different tempers, of different constitutions, and have all our failings; and consequently, as we cannot please all men, all men will never please us: as therefore we desire others to bear with us, so we must bear with their weaknesses, and suffer patiently their sins, pardoning those they commit against us, and imploring grace for their amendment: in their afflictions, we must comfort, and encourage them to submit, with resignation, to the orders of Providence, and assist them, not only with counsel, but even with our purse, so far as our ability will permit, and their necessity requires. This is to fulfil the law of Christ, the law of charity, so often not only recommended, but commanded, in the gospel; it is to carry perfection to the highest pitch. *For love is the fulfilling of the law.*

And, because the secret esteem of ourselves, is the ordinary source of our disesteem and contempt of those, who fall into disorders; the apostle tells us, *if any man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* Tho' we lead a more regular life than our neighbour, we have no reason to thank ourselves, but God's infinite goodness and mercy; it is he that either prevents temptations, or gives us strength to overcome them: we have of ourselves the power to sin; but it is grace, that enables us to practise virtue,

Lay aside therefore all thoughts of pride: it becomes not so miserable a creature. To what passions are you not subject in your soul? To what diseases in your body? How often have you abused God's favours? To what a height have you not been ungrateful? What an account must you render of your infidelities? A short reflection on these points, will take down our pride, and teach us humility.

Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not. Every moment of our lives is precious, because, by employing it well, we may gain an eternal reward; let not therefore one pass without practising those virtues, that are suitable to the state, in which Providence has placed us: time pass'd returns no more: and consequently the misemployment is irreparable: cease not to do good; *for in due time you will reap the profit.* When God thinks fit to withdraw you from this world, he will place you in his glory, and reward your labours with a recompence, no man can comprehend, but he that enjoys it.

O my Saviour! strike me with a terror of thy judgments, that I may never offend thee; give me a true idea of heaven, that I may be persuaded to abandon all worldly happiness, to purchase it: shew me my weakness, that I may not confide in my strength, but put all my confidence in thy assistance.

G O S P E L

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. vii. Verse

11. *And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain : and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.*

12. *Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother : and she was a widow : and much people of the city was with her.*

13. *And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.*

14. *And he came and touched the bier, (and they that bare him stood still) and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.*

15. *And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak : and he delivered him to his mother.*

16. *And there came a fear on all : and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us ; and, that God hath visited his people.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS dead man is an emblem of the state of a sinner ; sin separates the soul from God, as death separates it from the body : it takes away all sentiment of God, as death bereaves the body of all feeling of sensible objects. Ah Christians ! who live in sin, look on this young man stretch'd on a bier, and you will see a lively image of yourselves : for, as St. Chrysostome remarks, *though you are not laid out in a sepulchre, nor eaten by worms, you are notwithstanding dead, and in a far worse condition than the dead ; though worms gnaw not your flesh,*

passions tear your soul: you are buried in sin, and you are your own grave.

Our blessed Saviour met this dead corpse; his goodness sought the occasion; chance did not offer it; and his power restored it to life: he alone is master of life, who overcame death by dying, and triumph'd over it by his resurrection.

The tears of the mother soften'd our blessed Lord's heart, and moved him to compassion. *The Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.* Our Saviour does not condemn all sorrow at the death of our relations; for it would be a kind of inhumanity, not to drop some tears at parting with persons so dear; but he would have us keep a moderation, and not fly out into murmurs or exclamations against Providence, but receive the loss with patience and submission to his orders.

He teaches us to comfort our afflicted brethren, to visit them, and not to wait to dry their tears, till they come and shed them in our bosoms: he teaches us to deplore the death of our brethrens souls, to pray for their return to grace. What desolation, good God! do we daily see in families, at the death of an only son, who perchance had been dead to grace some years; and yet, who was touch'd at this misfortune, tho' ten times greater than his natural death? *He came near and touch'd the bier.* This method God takes to raise a sinner, from the death of sin, to the life of grace: he approaches by his mercy; he touches him with his grace; he raises his conscience against him; he lays before him the danger of his state, the pains of hell, the joys of heaven: he inflames his will; he cries out, *Young man, I say unto thee, arise!* yet, alas! these solicitations are unprofitable, unless

unless we hear his voice, and make the last effort to arise from the grave, in which our sins have buried us.

Why are we more insensible, dear Christians, than the dead? This young man heard and obeyed the first call: how often has he repeated to me, *young man, I say unto thee, arise; leave your disorders, and return to me: and how often have I been deaf to his kind and merciful invitations? Shall we be always obstinate? always rebellious?* He calls this moment upon you: why do not you answer? He bids you arise; why will you disobey? Perchance this may be the last favour: do not neglect it; he may perchance for the future be as deaf to your tears, as you are to his inspirations, and not only refuse you assistance, when you ask it, but laugh at your misery. *I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh,* Prov. i. 26. O terrible menace! Follow therefore at present the apostle's counsel; *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,* Eph. v. 14. You that sleep in sin, that are dead to grace, awake from your lethargy, and embrace those inspirations Christ infuses into your souls: stay not till the disease grows stronger upon you, and God's mercy less: tire not his patience by unreasonable delays, which generally end in a final impenitence.

The tears of the mother procured the life of the son, and our Saviour return'd him to her alive, as the reward of her sorrow. *And he deliver'd him to his mother.* Christ restores every converted sinner to the church his mother, who by her prayers and ~~was~~ obtained his conversion: Oh! with what tenderness of affection ought every sinner to love so kind a mother, who is not content to deplore the spiritual death of her children,

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children, but prays daily for their resurrection. Let us learn from our mother the church, to pray for all our brethren; for those that live up to the precepts of the gospel, that God will crown their virtues with perseverance; and for those that sleep in sin, that he will be pleased to awaken them, and to soften their hearts; and accomplish by a sincere repentance their conversion.

We cannot employ our charity more advantageously, nor more gratefully to our blessed Lord: he desires the conversion of every sinner. *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked,* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. No! he desires their repentance, and he has shewn it, by laying down his life, an infinite price for their redemption. He assures us, heaven rejoyces at the return of a sinner: How therefore can we gratify our Saviour more efficaciously than by imploring his mercy for our stray'd brethren, than by desiring him to cast an eye of compassion upon their unfortunate state, and to withdraw them from the danger of perishing eternally.

O my Saviour! in the first place, from the bottom of my heart, I conjure you rather to strike my body dead, than to permit me to murder my soul by sin: or, if I am so unfortunate, in spite of thy divine assistance, as to turn a homicide of myself, raise me to life by a quick and sincere repentance.

In the second place, I join my prayers to those of thy holy church, for all those that live in thy displeasure, by transgressing thy just and righteous commands.

Restore them to their mother, who deplores their death, and begs thy goodness to raise them, that they may persevere here in thy grace, and live eternally hereafter in thy glory.

EPISTLE

EPISTLE to the Ephesians, Chap. iii. Ver.

13. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulation for you, which is your glory.*

14. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

15. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

16. *That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*

17. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

18. *May be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

19. *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

20. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us;*

21. *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR Saviour foretold what persecutions this great apostle should undergo for the propagation of his gospel, and the event proved the truth of the prophecy. He gives himself a catalogue of his sufferings, and what is strange, he recounts with joy, what one can scarce read without compassion. He feared lest his new converts should take scandal at this conduct of God, and waver in faith, as if either he had not power to

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protect his servants, or wanted goodness to defend them. He conjures them therefore not to *faint at his tribulations*, which he underwent for their conversion; but rather to glory: *which is your glory*. That is, lose not courage, when you see me suffer all that malice can invent, or fury can put in execution: it is for your sakes I suffer; it is to procure you the glory of being children of God, members of Christ's church, and heirs of heaven.

Acknowledge, O Christians! the greatness of this favour, and admire God's bounty, who has been more good, more liberal to you, than to many thousands whom he has left in infidelity. Stoop not to any thing that is human or sensual, but raise your thoughts above earth, and fix them in heaven, whither ye are called. Ah! how can a Christian neglect all the advantages he has received to save his soul, and take all possible means to damn it? He would be excusable, if he wanted them, and perchance less criminal, if he did not believe them. But Oh! to believe as a Christian, and to lead the life of a pagan, is a crime unpardonable.

The apostle, with bended knees, asks of God for the Ephesians three things, which all Christians should every moment ask for themselves: that *he grant you, according to the riches of his glory, power to be strengthen'd with might by his Spirit, in the inner man*: that he, whose power has no bounds, whose bounty has no limits, would so fortify them with his grace, that they might overcome all temptations. Oh! that we had as much charity for ourselves, as St. Paul had for his converts: we should not so often make false steps; so often scandalize our neighbour, and expose our souls to the utmost hazard, by transgressing our duty and God's commands.

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He knew the weakness of his converts; that without the assistance of grace they could not possibly practise any Christian virtue, but would certainly fall into sin: and therefore he redoubles his prayers to the Father of our Lord, to draw from heaven his divine assistance. We are convinced of the necessity of grace, no less than St. Paul. We fall into disorders with it: and how should we stand against temptation without it? Why then do we not bend our knees, with St. Paul, to the Father of mercies, to procure this gift for ourselves, which he so earnestly begs for others? Our own salvation concerns us more nearly than that of our neighbour. Why then are we not more solicitous to obtain so necessary a request? If we are sick, we pray for health: if we have in hand a business of importance, for a happy success. Is the health of the body comparable to that of the soul? or any temporal concern to that of eternity? Why then, dear Christian, are we so diligent on the one hand, so negligent on the other? Change therefore your solicitude: in the first place, secure your soul, and then think of those things, which only concern time. To resist temptations, and to avoid sin, beg the divine assistance, with humility, faith, and perseverance: he has promised it on these conditions, and he cannot break his word.

The second petition of the apostle is, that *Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye may be rooted and grounded in love*: Tho' faith be necessary to salvation, it is not sufficient. St. James has writ an epistle to prove this article of Christian belief: and tho' St. Paul tells us, *without faith it is impossible to please God*; he assures us, without charity it will not do. Altho' we have faith strong enough to remove mountains; altho' we give all our wealth to the poor, and our bodies to the fire, for *Christ's* sake; without charity we

we are nothing ; these actions may keep us in the esteem of man, but are not of value in the sight of God.

Say not then, I believe, therefore I shall be saved. St. James will answer, *The devils believe, and tremble too*, James ii. 19. And yet they will never find mercy. God's works must enliven your faith, or else it is dead : believe all the church teaches, and practise all the commands. Let God be master and sole possessor of your hearts : love no creature but for him, and him for himself. Thus your faith will not be steril, but profitable : *It will be rooted and grounded in love*, which is the highest perfection, and the accomplishment of the gospel.

The third, *To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*. It is strange that those, who profess to believe in Jesus Christ, who acknowledge him to be the Son of God, their Redeemer, their Advocate, shew him so small affection, so little gratitude. But the reason is, we seldom recollect ourselves ; we never seriously consider the obligations we have to this divine Person, to this infinite Bounty ; for, if we did, we should melt into love, direct all our actions to his glory, and consequently receive of his goodness *all the fulness of God* : know therefore *the love of Christ* ; he has given us his life, and his bitter death, to obtain of his Father all graces necessary for our salvation : Our ingratitude does not tire his goodness ; he not only receives us, but assists us to return. He receives us into his favour, if we sincerely ask it, and will into his glory, if we persevere in his grace. In fine, from him we have received our being, and of him we hope to receive glory. The profit of all his merits is ours, he only reserves to himself the glory. St. Paul has reason

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to say, the love of *Christ* surpasses human comprehension ; for who can conceive, that an infinite Majesty should (if I may say so) doat to such a degree on us vile creatures, as to do for us all *Christ* has done, and to undergo all he has suffered?

But who can comprehend, on the other side, our strong obstinacy, who, by all these favours, cannot be won to love so great, so amiable a Benefactor. Ah ! let us blush and cover our faces for shame of our past infidelities and coldness, and resolve for the future to love nothing but *Jesus*. Offer up to his glory every action of the day ; his merits make them acceptable ; his grace gave you the power, and his goodness the will to do them. Withdraw your heart from all creatures, to consecrate it wholly to his love ; it was made for him ; he desires nothing else, and he alone deserves it.

GOSPEL of St. Luke, Chap. xiv. Verse

1. *And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him.*

2. *And behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropie.*

3. *And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?*

4. *And they held their peace. And he took him and healed him, and let him go :*

5. *And answered them, saying: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?*

6. *And they could not answer him again to these things.*

7. *And*

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7. *And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them :*

8. *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room: lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;*

9. *And he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee: Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.*

10. *But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee: Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.*

11. *For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

ONE of the chief *Pharisees* invited our Saviour to dinner, and he accepted of the invitation. One would have thought, either charity, esteem, or at least civility, moved this doctor of the law: but no: *They watch'd him*, not to observe the majesty of his Person, not to profit by the divine oracles, that dropt from his mouth, nor to draw edification from the sanctity of his actions: their design was to criticise upon every motion, and to find him (if possibly) guilty of some transgression, and to blame his conduct.

Oh! how many in the world imitate the example of this treacherous Pharisee! They profess a strict friendship to their neighbour: nothing more kind than their words, nothing more undermining than their hearts. They insinuate themselves into his familiarity, meerly to be masters of
of

of his secrets, and are sure to disclose every failing. *They watch him.*

This is (as Judas did our Saviour) to betray a friend with a kiss: it is not only a disingenuous proceeding, but unchristian also. What does your brother's faults concern you? If he has done ill, God will call him to account; he must answer at his great tribunal; his case deserves your pity, not your blame. God has made you judge of your own faults, but not of those of other people: Oh! that we would set a watch upon ourselves, and examine our own transgressions: we should neither have time, nor reason, to observe those of our brethren. But if you will observe your brother, observe his virtues, not his vices; to profit by those, not to censure these.

Seeing the world is so prone to observe, it is our duty to regulate our words and actions, with such circumspection and prudence, that even our enemies cannot put on them a false construction, and that others may be moved to follow our example.

The Pharisees, who made no scruple to misconstrue all our Saviour's actions, were nice to excess in the observation of the sabbath: and therefore he ask'd them, *Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?* He intended, by this question, to correct their error, to put them to the blush, and to shew, by their own practice, that the curing of a sick man on the sabbath, was no more violation of it, than the watering their cattle, or drawing them out of a pit, into which they were fallen. *Which of you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?* They durst not endeavour to justify their error, and yet would not abandon it: our Saviour *took him and healed him*: he had more regard for the misery of the patient,

patient, than for the unreasonable scandal those men would take at his charity : because those rigorists have no compassion, must Christ have no pity ? They that seem so zealous for the observation of the sabbath, forget these maxims, when interest lies at stake, when the question is to take care of their cattle ; and this is the conduct of all their descendants, who imitate the unchristian zeal of these Pharisees. You will not find one of a thousand, who drops not these scrupulous maxims, when they will not stand with his interest.

The ministers of the church must imitate our Saviour, not the Pharisees ; they must receive sinners with sweetness and charity, to cure them ; not with severity, to exasperate their wounds, and to render them incurable.

Oh ! how many see we, who scruple at trifles, and make no difficulty to transgress the most important precepts of the law ? Who, in our Saviour's expression, strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel ? Distractions trouble some ; and yet they give up all their time to temporal concerns, without remorse, as if their great affair lay in this world, and that they had nothing to fear, nothing to hope for, in the other : how many accuse themselves for being less charitable to the poor, who stick not to over-reach their neighbour, to engage him in suits of law, often unjust on their sides, and seldom necessary, and yet never think of restitution. An omission of some religious duty puts many on the torture ; but to pass whole months in visits, feasts, and revellings, gives them no check, no remorse. Some make a conscience to omit the publick prayers of the church ; but none to defame their neighbour, to fling away considerable sums on vain and superfluous ornaments ; nay, and to reduce, by gaming,
their

their families to beggary: such people have pharisaical, that is, false consciences; they tremble at shadows, and fear not real dangers. They *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

Imitate not, dear Christians, the Pharisees, who scrupulously observed our Saviour, that they might find something to censure, but made none to blame his charity, for curing a poor man on the sabbath; as if God had forbidden to shew, on that day, as much concern for men, as they had for their own cattle. Regulate your conscience by the precepts of the gospel, not by the false lights of a mistaken zeal; fear to break God's commands, and, if you fall, sleep not in your sin; examine your own conscience, condemn your failings, but meddle not with the actions of other men: till you can search their hearts, you are no competent judge: pretend not zeal for their good: it is oftentimes hard to distinguish true zeal from real malice; and the observers of another's conduct seldom intend to correct faults, but merely to find them.

This passage concludes with a parable, to teach the Pharisees (the proudest of men) humility. *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit down in the lowest room, that when he that had thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.* Our Lord not only recommends to us to take one of the lowest places, but the very last; he will have us to esteem ourselves not only inferior to some, but even to all. There is no danger, says St. Bernard, in humbling ourselves as much as we can: but there is in raising ourselves never so little. A man (continues this father) who passes through a low door, risks nothing

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nothing by stooping too low ; but he may hurt himself, who stoops not low enough.

One would think this virtue, so grateful to God, so necessary to Christians, were not hard. We are born in sin, subject to a thousand infirmities : what are all temporal advantages, but vain toys of no price, because of no duration ? the very gifts of grace are mere gratuities, and easily lost. Therefore, to be humble, we need only know ourselves : if I have a mind to raise myself, how many obstacles ? how many rivals stand in my way ? But if I endeavour to humble myself, no body takes it ill, no body opposes himself.

O dear Lord ! let me know myself and know thee : thy example will teach me humility, and my own baseness will defend me from pride. When I see my God humbled to the very death of the cross, can I, a vile worm, affect greatness ? Humble me, O God, in this world, to glorify me in the next.

EPISTLE to the Ephesians, Chap. iv. Verse

1. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.*
2. *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ;*
3. *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
4. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ;*
5. *One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*
6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

The

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostle conjures the Ephesians, with all the tenderness imaginable, to lead lives worthy of the sanctity of the religion they profess'd: this exhortation regards all Christians, who by baptism enter into the family of Christ, and into all the obligations of his religion. At the sacred font we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, to consecrate ourselves wholly to Christ: on this condition he receives us into his church, and adopts us for his children. We are therefore wholly his, and must square our lives by those rules he has left us in the gospel. It is not only a high disobedience, but an injustice, to follow, from morning to night, humour and fancy: to be solicitous to advance our interest, and unmindful of his glory. The apostle tells us, we *belong not to ourselves, but to Jesus Christ*. He must therefore regulate all our actions, the use of our wealth, our employment, and in a word our whole conduct. This is to live like a true christian, to live worthy of our vocation, to walk the short way to heaven.

By baptism I acknowledge Jesus for my Teacher, my Master, my Father, my Lord. These qualities oblige me to have a true zeal for his interests, to love and please him, to respect his orders, to obey his commands: those he has left us in his gospel; they are our rule, and to these we must conform our lives. Give me, O Jesus, a lively and generous love for thee, that I may say to my last breath, *Jesus is mine, and I am his*: let me not blush to profess I am thy disciple, but give me the courage to glory in the profession, and rather to lose my life than to abandon my duty.

You have made me, my God, a Christian; let not this favour turn to my misfortune, nor draw upon me a more severe judgment, and a more terrible damnation, than that of infidels and pagans. Give me such a supply of grace, that I may fulfil all the duties of my profession, that all my actions be as holy, as the name of Christian I have the honour to bear; that I may live and die in the observance of thy law, and afterwards enjoy the eternal reward in heaven, which thou hast prepared for those that live up to the vocation on earth, wherewith they are called.

The apostle recommends particularly humility, mildness, patience, and charity. *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* These virtues he inculcates almost in every chapter of his divine epistles, and conjures his converts to practise them. He learnt this doctrine from his Master; *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matth. xi. 29. He sets us his life for a pattern, and commands us all to imitate it.

We must therefore never seek honour and applause, but even reject it, when offered, if God's glory does not oblige us to receive it. Thus our blessed Saviour, who had right to the empire of the world, refused the small kingdom of Juda; he ordered his glorious appearance on Tabor to be kept secret: when he healed the sick, how often did he either command them to keep the miracle to themselves, or ascribed it to their faith; *thy faith hath made thee whole*, Luke viii. 48. although his goodness and power were the only causes of the cure. Thus did our blessed Lord refuse honour, he so justly deserved; he dropt favours where-ever he went, and would not even receive the glory.

Secondly,

Secondly, We must receive humiliations with submission, although we have given no occasion. How often has our Saviour been in these circumstances? We must love those, that condemn us, and do those all the good turns we are able, who endeavour to impair our reputation. In fine, if we intend to be truly humble, we must have no other passion but to die to ourselves, and to offer to God's glory (without any fault on our side) our fame, reputation, and all that is most dear. Oh! how hard is the practice of this virtue! Yet how necessary for those, who aspire to the perfection of the gospel, and to the imitation of our Saviour? God stooped so low, as to assume my nature, to live in contempt, and to die on a cross for my sins; and shall I repine to be humbled, to be reviled, for my own? I have often deserved hell for my transgressions; why therefore shall I not bear humiliations from men, to expiate my offences, and to return unto the favour of God.

Patience, says St. Paul, is necessary, *Heb. x. 36.* we are subject to so many accidents from without and within us, that, without this virtue, there is no happiness, no content even in this world. Some are betray'd by friends; others are circumvented by enemies; one loses a suit in law: another a son, the hope and support of his family. How many groan under the cruel pangs of the stone, and the torture of the gout: what remedy against these so sensible disasters, but a christian patience? Murmurs, complaints, and blasphemies against Providence, only serve to irritate the evil, and to make us miserable in the next world, as well as in this.

Raise, O Christian! thy eyes and heart to heaven; address thy prayers to him, without whose permission no misfortune can befall thee:

tell him, you know my weakness, O my God, and the weight of the evil that oppresses me. I believe the kingdom of heaven cannot be gained but by force and violence; I acknowledge this truth so ungrateful to nature; but, alas! I fail in the practice: intent on my misfortunes I am harass'd with chagrin, and spend those moments in complaints, which I should with patience lay out for the purchase of a happy eternity.

O my God! I am confounded, when I consider the courage of thy saints, and compare their patience with my cowardice. Thy martyrs suffered with joy; malice could not invent more torments, than they overcame: their constancy tormented their very tormentors, and, tho' they fell in the combat, they came off victorious. Oh! how many of thy servants have fallen, on a sudden, from the top of glory to the very bottom of contempt, from wealth into indigence? Persecuted on all sides, they blessed thy conduct, and, forgetful of their sufferings, they seemed only concerned for their enemies sins. I aspire to their glory: why therefore do I refuse to imitate their example? Oh! I condemn my impatience, and bless thy providence for putting me in the way to heaven, in which all thy saints, and thy only Son our Saviour, have walked. All the sufferings here bear no proportion with those my sins deserve, nor with that glory, thy servants enjoy in heaven.

I therefore put myself intirely into the hands of thy providence: I only beseech thy goodness to fortify my weakness, and I beg this favour by the merits of thy only Son, and my Saviour.

Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; and the motive the apostle brings

brings is, *that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism*, and that we are all called to the same inheritance, *ye are called in one hope of your calling*. We are servants to the same Master, professors of the same faith, members of the same body, and designed for the same eternal felicity. These relations should unite our minds, and stifle all resentments, which may rise from our different tempers, inclinations, or interests.

But, O God! nothing but thy divine hand can draw this christian concord from such a discord of humours. If we are left to ourselves, our actions will clash, as well as our natures: we shall be at variance with ourselves, and much more with our neighbour.

GOSPEL of St. Matth. Chap. xxii. Verse

34. *But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.*

35. *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,*

36. *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

37. *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

38. *This is the first and great commandment.*

39. *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

40. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS passage of scripture sets before us the two great precepts of the Gospel, the love of God, and of our neighbour. On these the whole law depends: their observance or transgression are inseparable. *If any man say, I love God, and at the same time hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, — how can he love God?* 1 John iv. 20. This is the peculiar precept of our Saviour: in the old law it was written, Love your friend; but Christ has raised it to a higher perfection, Love even your enemies; this charity, pure and disinterested, is the proper character of a true Christian.

What an illusion, my God, to persuade myself I love you, that I have virtue and religion, when I feel within me aversions, when I find my heart torn with jealousy, and triumph in my brethrens misfortunes. No! tho', in this disposition, I give all my wealth to the poor, tho' I practise all the greatest austerities and even lose my life for thy sake, I am dead to thee.

How few, my God, have this divine virtue, even of those, who are the greatest pretenders to piety? and set up for zealots? Without charity, all is insignificant, all illusion. Interest banishes it from the hearts of some; passions quite extinguish it in others; caprice and ill humour in most. Did detraction ever spread wider than at present? Does it not infect all states, all conditions? Is it not the common theme of conversation? And are we ever more eloquent or witty, than when we either blacken, or rally our brethren? Suppose they have fallen into weaknesses, does not charity oblige us to excuse their faults, and does it not forbid us to divulge them? At least, if we will take our neighbour's

bour's life to pieces, is it not more christian to take notice of his virtues, which perchance are oftentimes more obvious than his defects, and deserve more praise than blame? But, O my God! what an illusion is it, to decry my brother, out of a pretext of thy glory? Yet how many take vice for zeal, and break thy law of charity, to vindicate, as they pretend, thy honour. If we decry a brother out of a motive of charity, why do not we practise the same virtue towards ourselves? we cannot be ignorant of our own faults, why do we not proclaim them? Why do we not decry our own conduct, and blame our ingritudes?

Alas! we deal so tenderly with ourselves, that we can scarce overcome ourselves, so far as to discover our faults even in confession to God almighty, tho' we know he has promis'd forgiveness on no other condition.

O good God! how guilty am I in thy sight of the breach of this divine precept; I acknowledge myself criminal, and humbly beg pardon for my offence. I have not loved thee, because I have not loved my brother. I confess my crime, and fly to thy mercy for forgiveness: I will not only abstain from offending him, but study to perform all the duties of a Christian in his favour. I will assist him by my counsel, relieve him with my purse, rejoice with him in his good fortune, and comfort him in his bad. And if it is not in my power to retrieve his misery, I will not deny him at least compassion.

I. EPISTLE to the Corinthians, Chap. i. Ver.

4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ:*

5. *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge:*

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6. *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.*

7. *So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

8. *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul gives us here the model of a true piety, which consists not only in returning our Creator continual thanks for the graces and favours he is pleased to bestow on us, but also for those he imparts to others on your behalf. *I thank my God always for the grace of God, which is given you by Jesus Christ.*

Alas! I am so far from acknowledging, with thanks, the graces, O my God, you do others, that I am even unmindful of those you do me. My whole life is a continual train of thy favours: every moment is mark'd by some effect of thy kindness: and yet for so many thousands, how often have I seriously returned thanks? As every moment is signalized by some favour, so I should consecrate every moment to acts of gratitude; and acknowledgment of past graces, is a motive to liberality for the future. But my infidelities, O God, have stopt this source; and if you continue your favours, I owe them not to my deserts, but wholly to your bounty.

Take, O Father of mercy, these resolutions in part of some small satisfaction for my former ingratitude.

I will, with thy apostle, implore thy grace for my stray'd brethren, and pray for their conversion. I will, morning and night, return thee most humble thanks for all the benefits received from the first moment

moment of my life, and beg pardon for all those I have not regarded, or abused. I will thank thee for having adopted me into thy family by baptism; for having by thy providential care given me a christian education, preferably to so many others among mankind, whom thy justice has left in error, who live in sin, and probably will die, without a thorough repentance.

I will thank thee, that, notwithstanding my infidelities, thy goodness has bore with me year after year, and not cut me off in my disorders, as my crimes deserved; and as thou hast many others, less criminal, less ungrateful, than I. Yet, just to others, thou hast been all mercy to me, and continued thy favours, tho' I have misemploy'd them. O! what can I return for all that thou hast done for me? Whatever I give that is grateful to thee, my God, is thy own. Thou didst give it me by thy grace, by thy divine assistance; without which, what am I, but poor and weak, unable to present thee the least action that deserves heaven? Accept therefore thy own gift, seeing I have nothing else worthy of thy acceptance: take all the good I do, and pardon all the sins I commit.

That in every thing ye are enrich'd by him, in all utterance, and knowledge. The apostle congratulates the *Corinthians*, not on any temporal blessing, not for vain eloquence or science, but for their knowledge of the divine mysteries, and their abilities to defend them against the sophisms of their idolatrous citizens. We should all be able to render a reason of our faith, and not owe it merely to education, and our baptism. We live in the midst of errors, as well as the *Corinthians*; and consequently need the same arms, and the gift of sciences to defend truth against heresy. Ignorance makes many turn apostates, and hazard heaven for a vain and petty interest. Did we not stick barely
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on the surface of religion, but enter into it, we should find it a more serious thing, than most people pretend; that our eternal salvation depends upon the belief of its mysteries, and the practice of its morals: And what can be a greater concern, than a happy or a miserable eternity?

Learn therefore, why you are christians, as far as your capacities and circumstances will permit; and imprint this divine oracle in the very bottom of your hearts, that without true faith there is no salvation, *Heb. xi. 6.* This impression will strengthen you against temptation, and render you victorious over all the allurements of worldly grandeur. O God! what will it avail me to gain the whole world, if I lose my soul by the purchase? *The fashion of this world passeth away.* Neither prosperity nor adversity can be of a long continuance; but eternity stands immoveable; it always is, and never will end.

Who also shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sense of this verse is not absolute, that all the converts of Corinth should be confirmed in grace; for we know, the incestuous man was not: but *St. Paul* means, that God will not fail to give them all graces necessary to confirm and perfect them in all virtues, if they put no obstacle to his graces. He leaves all men the liberty either to embrace or refuse his graces, to resist his inspirations or to follow them: *He invites, says St. Chrysostom, to crowns and rewards, but he forces not those who refuse to accept them.*

O my Saviour! I doubt not of thy goodness, but I fear my own weakness: Nothing will be wanting on thy side to render *me blameless*, and to perfect me in all virtue. But Oh! will not my co-operation fail? Without this, I shall be miserable notwithstanding this goodness; and thy favours will

will render me more criminal. Soften therefore my stony heart! Subdue my rebellious will, that it may obey thy call, and comply with all thy commands.

In the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. I expect that terrible moment of thy coming, O Lord, with fear and trembling! With what face shall I appear at thy just tribunal, who have so often transgress'd thy commands, so often resisted thy grace? I confess, I deserve to feel all the weight of thy justice; my sins deserve it, and my crimes cry out aloud for vengeance. But, O! remember, my God, thy goodness, and look not upon my disorders! Let not the blood of thy dear Son be shed in vain for me, that has been beneficial to so many others. Tho' I fear, I will trust to find mercy: Give me grace to repent, and crown my repentance with perseverance.

GOSPEL of St. Matth. Chap. ix. Verse

1. *And he entred into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.*

2. *And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

3. *And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

4. *And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

5. *For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise, and walk?*

6. *But that ye may know, that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

7. *And he arose, and departed to his house.*

8. *But*

8. *But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE friends of this paralytick brought him to our Saviour, and their faith and entreaty obtained the cure. *And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the sick of the palsy, Son be of good cheer.* We see here the effect of our brethrens prayers; and this ought to move us to recommend ourselves in all necessities to their charity, not out of compliment, but of a sincere sense of devotion; and to pray for those, who either lie under temporal infirmities, or, what is more deplorable, under the slavery of sin. For what can be more grateful to God, than to implore his mercy for those, who walk on the brink of perdition, who live in his disfavour, and who are in danger to die his enemies? For those, for whom Christ not only pray'd with tears of blood, but also died an ignominious and cruel death?

Ah most merciful Redeemer! Take compassion on all my stray'd brethren, who, out of weakness or malice, abandon thee, to serve the world, and prophane thy religion by the disorders of their lives: they are the work of thy hands, and the price of thy blood. Restore them to thy favour by the efficacy of thy grace; give them victory over their passions, contempt of the world, and a sincere sorrow for their offences.

The cure of the body was only ask'd, but our Saviour granted that of the soul; *thy sins are forgiven thee.* This disease was the cause of the other, and our Lord would first remove the cause, before he would heal the distemper. In vain, dear Christians, in sickness, we send for the

the doctor, if the cause of the evil lies in the soul; our sins are the cause; the disease, the punishment: our intemperance, injustice, and ill courses, have inflamed God's anger; he puts the humours in a ferment, and makes all those parts of our body instruments of our torment, that have been instruments of our sin.

O my Saviour! I ask no temporal blessing, but on condition it conduces to thy glory, and my salvation. Alas! I am blind, and cannot foresee what will turn to my good, what to my prejudice. I leave all that concerns this world to thy choice: sickness or health, poverty or riches, life or death, are indifferent to me: only let me hear this comfortable word, *thy sins are forgiven thee*, and I am content.

Some of the scribes thought within themselves, he blasphemed; but they durst not say so, for fear of the people: but our Saviour shewed what he was, by discovering their thoughts. For if God alone can remit sins, he alone can enter into our thoughts: but, to convince them he had power to pardon sins, he commanded the paralytick to arise; *take up thy bed, and go unto thy house*, and he obey'd the command.

But why, O Lord, dost thou work miracles, to convince the Pharisees of thy divinity? Their obstinacy is proof against all motives; their ignorance lies in their heart, not in their understanding; thy goodness only serves to render them more guilty.

I acknowledge, my Saviour, thou art the true Lamb, that takest away the sins of the world: thou hast the power, and the goodness, to forgive more sins, than I am able to commit, and thou desirest nothing more than to pardon. Why then do I defer one moment to fling myself at thy feet, and to desire thee to take a poor sinner into

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into thy favour, and protection? Thou dost stretch out thy hand, to receive me; thy voice, to recall me from my disorders; thou dost promise heaven, if I return, and threatenest hell, if I refuse. Can I be such an enemy to myself, as neither to be moved by such a reward, nor frightened by such a punishment? From this moment I will arise from the lethargy, my sins have cast me into; I will break with the world eternally, and bid adieu to all the fawning pleasures of the flesh, which only flatter my body, to ruin my soul, and promise content, but breed affliction.

However, to confound the scribes, he would work the cure, and shew, that not he, but they were guilty of blasphemy. *He said to the sick of the palsy: Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house:* The cure followed his command, and he arose, and departed to his house.

Our Saviour commanded three things to be observed by all those, who seriously repent. *Arise:* they must arise from the abyss, into which their crimes had cast them, by a true horror and detestation; and firmly purpose to stand to their duty for the future. They must not only leave sin, but fly the occasion, and break through all the obstacles, that interpose between them and their duty. *Take up thy bed:* they must carry the weight of their passions by a generous resistance, and labour to root out all ill habits contracted by frequent relapses.

Go unto thy house. They must enter into themselves, and compare, in solitude and cool blood, the miserable state of a sinner, with the happiness of a penitent. What was I by my sins, and what am I now by thy mercy, O my God? I was thy mortal enemy, a slave of Satan, and heir to hell; had thy justice taken me off

off in that deplorable state, I had pass'd into a worse, where nothing but horror dwells, nothing occurs but darkness and confusion, and both eternal. But Oh! now I am returned to thy grace, I have broken my chains, and of a slave am become thy child, thy favourite, and am restored to the title of thy kingdom. Let me fall no more into the precipices, from which thy goodness hath withdrawn me! Support my weakness, guide my steps, and give me victory over all temptations!

EPISTLE to the Ephesians, Chap. iv. Verse

22. *That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*

23. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*

24. *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

25. *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

26. *Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*

27. *Neither give place to the devil.*

28. *Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

The

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostle writes to the Ephesian converts, and conjures them to change their manners, with their religion. *Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man.* When you lived in Pagan blindness, you followed the corrupt inclinations of nature; you gave all to sense, and placed your happiness in gratifying nature. But, being called by God's grace to christianity, you must leave your pagan conversation with your idols, and frame your lives by the maxims of the gospel. In fine, *you must be renewed in the spirit of your mind.* You must hate what before you adored, and love what you hated: you must lay down your ancient prejudices, and esteem crosses and mortifications the only wisdom, which before you held for the last of follies. These truths the apostle preach'd to the new converts of Ephesus, and he has left them written for the instruction of all Christians.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. This concerns us all. Who has walk'd so steady, as not to fall? Who has not been carried away, beyond his duty, by the heat and violence of his passions? Who has not betrayed his conscience to pamper flesh, and abandoned virtue to follow vice? Alas! my God, we are all guilty, and thou hast declared by the mouth of thy favorite apostle, *that, if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us.* Our lives have been a continual series of transgressions, often even without scruple, and sometimes without shame. We will put on, for the future, *the new man, which after God is created in righteousness.* We will wash out the stains of our former sins with never-ceasing tears, and practise those virtues, thy law commands.

commands. I find by experience, worldly delights have nothing pleasing, but the name; they amuse for a while, and then disappear, leaving nothing behind them, but remorse and regret, for having pawned our souls and thy favour for mere illusions.

The apostle descends to particulars, and first he bids them *put away lying, and speak the truth*. This is a common weakness, and few can plead not guilty; it is a real offence to God; and, tho' we call it a small sin, it is a great offence: nay, all the merits of saints and angels are not able to satisfy God's justice for it. It is not only against the law of God, but of nature also; for speech was given us to entertain and to carry on society, which cannot subsist, unless our tongues and our thoughts agree. The baseness of this vice appears by this, that it's one of the greatest affronts we can put on a man, to call him a liar; and how many have endeavoured to wash off the aspersions with the blood of the defamer?

But, dear Christians, if it be such an infamy to be called a liar, is it not a far greater to be one? If the very name be odious and degrading, is not the thing much more? Honour, therefore, as well as conscience, dissuades you from this vice; which renders you ungrateful to God, and unacceptable to men.

Give me, my God, the grace to put a guard on my lips, that nothing unseemly, nothing ungrateful to thy divine majesty, may pass them; the tongue is unquiet and restless, and seldom moves but to the prejudice of him that speaks, and often of him that hears. A child can put it in motion; nothing but a solid virtue can stop it. Give me thy assistance, that I may curb all its sallies, that I may keep it within the bounds

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of thy law, and never use it but to ask thy pardon, and praise thy mercy.

Be ye angry, and sin not. Let us not imagine, the apostle commands us to be angry; no! he inculcates mildness and sweetness, almost in every epistle, as an indispensable duty. St. Augustin tells us, in this place he means, that, if the passion of anger rises in us, in punishment of our sins, and if we cannot hinder it, we must at least refuse our consent, endeavour to suppress the storm, and procure a calm immediately. Thus we shall *be angry*, but *without sin*, and give *no entrance to the devil*. We shall stop the dangerous effects, that follow this blind and unruly passion, that are always unseemly, and often mortal: the philosopher calls it a short madness, *brevis insania*; it blinds reason, it unmans us, and levels us with beasts, without understanding, or discourse. Good God! How easily do we let loose this violent passion? for how slight provocations? A child, a domestick, has committed a small oversight, and presently the parents, or master, put all the house into a ferment; nothing is heard but noise and clamour, but oaths and imprecations: why this tumult? It had been more wise to have overlook'd the fault, and ten times more Christian to have pardoned it; but, if a correction was necessary, it should have been done in the spirit of mildness and charity, not in that of heat and fury; charity may raise repentance, and give more caution for the future; but a reprimand, in anger, raises indignation. O God! how often hast thou pardoned in me not only innocent oversights, but even malicious offences? Why then shall I treat my inferiors with inhumanity and outrage? why shall I correct their offences against me, by committing a real offence against thee? Thou hast
recalled

recalled me from my transgressions with bounty and goodness: I will imitate thy example, and persuade my inferiors to their duty, by complying with my own.

Rather let him labour, working with his hands.

The apostle dissuades us from idleness, by entering on some innocent employment: it is the highest folly (says the wise man) to let one's life run out in idleness. An idle man is exposed to a thousand dangers, to a thousand temptations; he lies open to all the assaults of the devil, to all the allurements of flesh and blood; so that, if no good object takes up his thoughts, bad ones will. It is strange to see so many Christians idle, nay tired with their idleness; notwithstanding, have neither leisure nor patience to pray, or to hear a sermon; nay, they are always in a hurry, yet always idle; because they do nothing for heaven, which is their only business; all their youth passes in sports and pleasures, always vain, and often criminal; and when age interrupts their diversions, they are then idle by necessity, as before by pleasure.

O my Saviour! what extravagance to believe what we believe, to fear what we fear, and to live as we do! All my days are past as a shadow, and what remains now but a coffin? But the cause of my grief is, that so many precious moments are pass'd in idleness and indolence, which I might have employed in the purchase of heaven: but seeing, O God, thou hast given me these saving reflections, I will from this moment change my conduct, and hope by thy grace to execute my resolutions.

GOSPEL of St. Matthew, Chap. xxii. Verse

1. *And Jesus answered, and spake unto them again by parables, and said,*

2. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son:*

3. *And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*

4. *Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage.*

5. *But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.*

6. *And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*

7. *But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.*

8. *Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden, were not worthy.*

9. *Go ye therefore into the high ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.*

10. *So those servants went into the high-ways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

11. *And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment,*

12. *And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless.*

13. *Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

14. *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

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THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE parable shews, that God invites all nations to the gospel, but that all will not embrace it ; and that few of those that are called, are chosen. The refusal, my God, lies at our own door, and consequently our reprobation ; thou hast invited us, nay press'd us to come. Thou hast supplied us with all necessaries ; with instructions, inspirations, graces ; so that we can only complain of our own folly ; we will not come ; nothing is wanting but our will, to compleat our happiness.

What hindered those that were invited to come ? *One went away to his farm, another to his merchandise,* Matt. xxii. 5. Temporal concerns, covetousness, and interest, sway'd more with them, than their eternal happiness : and so they postponed their only concern to beeves and agriculture.

Is not this a lively picture of our conduct, my God ? Hast thou not drawn my folly to the life in this parable ? Thou hast sent thy servants to invite me to thy gospel : they have instructed me ; they have convinc'd me there is no salvation by any other name, than that of Jesus. Why then have I refused to embrace the truth, thy goodness has revealed to me, and thy grace has so often press'd me to profess ? Alas ! I have had more deference for human respects, than for thy invitation ; more regard for a fortune in this world, than an eternal kingdom in the other. I will dally no more with thy goodness, nor tire thy patience with delays ; I will embrace that faith, thy apostles preached, and millions of martyrs have seal'd with their blood ; I lie under the same obligation to profess it ; thou hast made me the same promises ; thou suppliest
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the same grace, and will, I hope, give me the same courage and patience.

The most considerable for wealth and honour, on trivial pretexts, refusing the invitation, the king sent his servants into the high-way, and they *gather'd all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

It is not without reason, my God, thou hast favoured the poor with a beatitude, *blest are the poor*; and laid a heavy woe on the rich: pride and prosperity withdraw these from thy service: misery and indigence persuade those to embrace it: hoping for nothing in this world, they raise their eyes and hearts to heaven, and resolve to be happy hereafter, tho' they are miserable here; having nothing to lose, what have they to fear? They are below notice, and consequently out of the reach of human respects. Luxury and vanity, that tie so many to the world, are unknown vices to them; they are out of reach, and merely incident to those who live in grandeur and plenty. Fishermen first preach'd thy gospel, and the poor first embrac'd it: in fine, thou hast designed heaven for the poor, and left this world to the rich. I chuse to be here a *Lazarus* both in poverty and sickness, to secure heaven in reversion, rather than to be the rich glutton with his unhappy exit, the sequel of his riot and luxury.

But even all, who came to the feast, were not well received; for one ventured to appear without a nuptial garment, and the king commanded his servants to bind him hand and foot, and to cast him into outer darkness: What does this signify, my God, but that even all those, who receive thy faith and sacraments, who profess thy religion, will not be saved? alas! no! By faith we are members of thy body; but without good works we are dead; obedience to thy commands, and charity, is the
nuptial

nuptial garment : and without them we shall be thrown out of thy presence, with publicans and sinners : it is less criminal to believe almost nothing of what we must do to be saved, than to do almost nothing of what we believe.

The conclusion of this parable ought to make us tremble, and strike us with horror ; few of those, that are called to the kingdom of heaven, enter. *Many are called, but few chosen.* After this declaration of the Son of God, St. Paul had reason to exhort all christians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling : There are only two ways to heaven, innocence or repentance : Of a thousand shall we find one, who has not forfeited his baptismal grace by repeated sins ? and how few have carried it to their graves ? How few of those, who have lost their innocence, recover grace by a sincere repentance ? Does not vice reign in all states, among all persons ? If therefore they die as they live, how few are saved ?

Had our Saviour said, all christians shall be saved, could they live otherwise than they do ? But he says, *few shall be saved*, and yet we live without caution, without fear, nay with security : Were we among a hundred, of which one must be condemned to die, would not every one of the number tremble, and fear lest the fatal lot should pronounce his condemnation ? Yet we know that few of the whole mass of christians will be saved, that the far greatest part will miscarry ; we know not whether we are not of the number ; and yet we play, laugh, and revel, as if we intended to take the properest methods to insure our damnation.

My dear Saviour ! I confess, with shame and confusion, I have followed the crowd, I have followed the broad way that leads to perdition ; but I resolve from this moment to enter into the strait path that conveys to heaven ; and tho' one man

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alone was to be saved, I will hope, by the assistance of thy grace, to be that happy one, chosen out of thousands.

EPISTLE to the Ephesians, Chap. v. Verse

15. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

16. *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

17. *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

18. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit :*

19. *Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,*

20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ;*

21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

WHilst we live in this world, we travel in an enemy's country ; every step presents us new ambushes, and leads us into new dangers : wherefore St. Paul had reason to inspire caution, and so have we to stand upon our guard ; *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.* Every object we see, is a snare, able to entrap us : Our companions are infectious, their conversation dangerous, and often mortal ; we are not sure of our dearest friends, and most of all must distrust ourselves. Solitude has its temptations, company throws us into a thousand dangers ; so that there is no assurance of security with all our precaution,
and

and the least negligence may be the cause of our ruin.

Yet alas! against the advice of *St. Paul*, and of common prudence, we walk as fools, as if our ruin was impossible or inevitable. We fling ourselves into danger, and even court temptation itself; we complain, the devil is strong: it is our presumption gives him strength, and our cowardice the victory: He knows he cannot subdue our heart by force, and therefore he keeps secret intelligence with our senses, raises our passions, and presents those objects that inflame these, and seduce the others; but whilst we view them at a distance, they make small impression; their presence wounds us, and the occasion overcomes us.

Fly the occasion; and then temptation will make but small impression: but if you give way to it; what wonder you burn in the midst of impure flames; and catch the plague, when you draw in the infection?

Good God! we fling ourselves (if I may say so) on the very swords of our enemies; we pass our lives in mixt assemblies, in conversations of gallantry, in dangerous friendships, in play-houses, where lust is painted with a thousand charms, and chastity ridiculed; where vice triumphs, and virtue is led captive. Is not this to walk as fools? to court danger? And what is the consequence, but that we shall perish in our folly?

O my God! give me a lively conviction of the heinous nature of sin! Of the rewards thou hast prepared for the just, and of the fire thou hast kindled for the reprobate! I confess, the want of this has hitherto exposed me to a thousand dangers; and if I have often disengaged myself without sin, I have not without imprudence, for having thrust myself among enemies I might have avoided. I will for the future stand upon my guard; and
those

those temptations I cannot fly, I hope, by the help of thy grace, to overcome. I will for ever bid adieu to such assemblies, as expose me to the danger of offending thee. I will give my heart to no creature: experience teaches to our cost, we are masters of nothing, when we have made it over; and we never part with it, without forfeiting our innocence. In a word, whilst we breathe, dangers surround us; no man is secure: But he is less exposed, who diffides in himself, my God, and puts all his confidence in thee.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Alas! my God, ignorance of my duty is not my defect, but non-compliance. My perfection consists in doing thy holy will, and this, in discharging, for thy sake, all the duties that belong to the station, in which thy providence has placed me.

For this reason, I must be content with my condition, and neither desire to be greater, nor wish to be less. I must neither envy those that are above me, nor contemn those that are below me. We have all parts in the great tragedy acted on the stage of the world; it is of little importance what persons we represent, whether of a king, or a lackey: He carries off the applause, who performs his part the best.

If I am a master of a family, I must regulate it according to my state, my birth, and my revenues: But if my estate cannot answer my dignities, I must not support it by the ruin of creditors, nor at the expence of my conscience.

I must bring up my children in the fear of God, and take care my domesticks do their duty to him, before they acquit themselves of that they owe me; if I take his interest to heart, he will not forget mine.

If thou hast placed me in a station of judicature, I must not regard the persons, but the cause; and pronounce in favour of a peasant against a lord, if his cause be just. Dignity must not fright me; solicitations must not bias me; nor bribes sway my judgment. In fine, I must discharge every part of those duties my state requires; not out of a motive of honour, or interest, but for thy sake, because it is thy command to which I owe obedience. In this, my God, consists my perfection; this thou dost require, and this I intend to perform. But alas! my past neglect of these duties teaches me how inconstant I am in my resolutions, how weak in the performance: thy grace alone can enable me to fulfil thy holy will, and my obligation. I ask, I beg it with humility and confidence, out of a sincere desire to please thee.

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess. This vice, even in the opinion of the world, is unreputable: And yet, what is strange, how many are guilty, even of those, who are pretenders to reputation? Can any thing be imagined more unseemly, than for a man to drown his great prerogative reason, and to cast himself on the same level with beasts? One would think reason was a burthen, men are so willing to lose it. But *St. Paul* dissuades us from it, for another reason, because *there is excess in it*. It raises our passions, inflames nature, and prompts to evil: And when temptation presses, when reason is obscured with vapours, and occasion favours, what can be expected but ruin and destruction to our souls? We lay our sins on the corruption of nature, on its inclination to pleasure and ease: But then, why do we prompt it to rebellion? Why do we enforce its violence, by pampering it with those things that heighten the blood, and set our passions all on fire? What wonder, a spark breaks out into a flame, if we foment it with oil, or fuel?
Had

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Had we any care of our salvation, would we not rather subdue our flesh by abstinence and fasting, with *St. Paul*, than strengthen it by riot and intemperance?

Flesh and blood, my God, are my greatest enemies: why should I treat them as friends, to my ruin, and thy dishonour? Oh no! I will break their force by mortification, and I am sure, it is far more easy to refuse, than to satisfy their desires. I have learnt by sad experience, the more I indulge them, the more they crave; the more I gratify them, the more they are disposed to rebel.

The GOSPEL of St. John, Chap. iv. Ver.

46. *So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.*

47. *When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.*

48. *Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

49. *The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.*

50. *Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.*

51. *And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.*

52. *Then enquired he of them the hour, when he began to amend: and they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.*

53. *So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.*

The

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

WE find, in the gospel, fathers, who conjure our Saviour to cure their children in danger of death, but none, who send them to him to be instructed in virtue. Yet this is the main duty of a parent, the most incumbent obligation, but the most neglected. The Holy Ghost commands parents to instruct their children: *Hast thou children? Instruct them.* And St. Paul protests, that those that do not, are worse than infidels.

How many have lived like Pagans, and died reprobates, because they were educated without any knowledge of virtue, or principles of religion? If these unfortunate creatures are obliged to their parents for a short life; I am sure they may in great part lay at their door the misfortune of an eternal death. How many fathers lead otherwise lives without stain or reproach; nay, and would be saints, had they no children? How many mothers would be without blemish in the sight of God, were they not guilty of a daughter's misbehaviour, by their neglect of giving her a christian education? The scripture gives *Eli* a favourable character, and his submission to the terrible sentence God pronounced against him, shews he was religious. But Oh! he was too indulgent a father! He abandoned his sons education, let their disorders pass without correction, and so concurred to their damnation, and drew upon himself a sudden death, and an eternal curse on his family.

Good God! what account must these parents render at thy tribunal, who put their children into the hands of governors and governants; who are only proper to fit them out for the world, without any regard of making them virtuous servants of Almighty God? I tremble when I reflect on this
great

great neglect ; and yet they persuade themselves they are dispensed from all farther care ; but this is an error. Fathers and mothers ! you must see whether your children are in sure hands : Whether they are taught the grounds of their religion : Whether means be taken to tame their passions before they get a head, and become ungovernable : Whether they are inured to virtue, moved to the practice by hope of reward, or frightened from vice, by the fear of punishment. It is not sufficient to write and read, to dance and fence ; these are the accomplishments of a gentleman, but you must teach them those of a christian. This ought to be your first care ; yet this scarce enters into your thoughts.

If it be a crime not to give children a virtuous education, what a sin is it to give them a vicious one ? Some seem parents, merely to transmit their vices to their posterity : Children think it laudable to imitate their parents, and if those set a bad example, they will be sure to follow it. Now what does a mother commonly praise in a young daughter ? Is it piety ? an air of modesty and reserve ? a love of retirement ? Alas ! too too often she instills contrary principles : she praises her wit, her assurance, her behaviour, free and engaging, her shape and complexion ; in fine, all that is worldly, nothing that is christian. What impression must this make on a tender heart, too naturally carried to vanity and pleasure !

What sorrow, O Lord, what regret do these reflections raise ? What remorse do I feel within me, for neglecting my duty to children, servants, and all those thou hast committed to my charge ? Give time, and I will repair my past negligence by my future care and vigilance.

This nobleman, without doubt, had either seen some of our Saviour's miracles, or at least heard of them ; why else should he now demand one in
favour

favour of his dying son? But we don't read he made any application to him before: but the fear of a son's death, and perchance an heir, drew the father to implore our Saviour to cure a disease, too strong for the doctor's skill, and the remedies of nature.

Why does the father press our Saviour with such instance; *Sir, come down ere my son die?* Does he know, a longer life will turn to his advantage? That he will use the favour to his sanctification, and not abuse it to his damnation? Alas! we ask temporal blessings without deliberation, and never consider, whether a refusal be not a greater favour, than a grant of our petition. Poor Rachel begged for a child, and protested she should die if her prayer was denied. It was granted: but she found death at her delivery, which she feared before; and scarce lived long enough to be called its mother.

Seeing we know not what we ask, let us leave all temporal things to the disposition of Providence: at least, pray for them with indifference, and put in this condition, If they conduce, O God, to thy glory, and my salvation. But Oh! Parents too too often confine their kindness to this world, as if there were neither happiness to be hoped for, nor torments to be feared in the other. They labour, like galley-slaves, to build them a fortune; they break through all the laws of justice and conscience, and expose themselves to all the punishments of the rich man, for an heir, that will not shed one tear on their coffin, nor utter one sigh or groan for their departed souls.

I know, parents must provide for their children; but the best provision is the fear of God, and submission to his holy will: but if you leave them a great estate without piety, you put

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a sword in the hands of a madman, and smooth for him the way to perdition.

My God! I ask, I implore thy grace to save my soul, and I conjure thy goodness to grant my request. But for any thing that concerns this life, I leave all to thy disposition, and put myself under the wings of thy providence. Health or sickness; life or death; abundance or indigence; are to me indifferent; if I please thee, I desire nothing more.

EPISTLE to the Ephesians, Chap. vi. Verse

10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

11. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

13. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness.*

15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

16. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

17. *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

The

The MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul tells us, we are surrounded with enemies, and at the same time shews us the way to overcome them. *Be strong in our Lord, and in the power of his might*: call upon heaven for assistance by fervent prayer. Diffide in yourselves, confide in him; and put your trust in his strength, not in your own courage. Had St. Peter followed this counsel, he had never turned apostate, nor denied the best of masters, by the worst of infidelities. But he presumed on his own strength, and so God would humble his pride, by shewing him his weakness; and this is the fate of the presumptuous, who fancy they are proof against temptation, and never ask God to protect them, without whose assistance nothing can be expected but an overthrow.

I have found to my confusion, O God, that without thee, I am not only unable to do good, but even to resist evil. Feeble and unconstant as I am, I make resolutions to serve thee, and break them with more facility than I made them. What is the reason, my God? But that I rely upon my own strength, and forget to implore thine? Discover to me the ambushes of my enemies, and make me so happy as to overcome them.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers: therefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day. We are in a continual war with the devil, who, like a roaring lion, makes his rounds to devour us: his pride discarded him of all right to happiness, and plunged him into eternal misery. Envyng our state, he employs all artifice to draw us into sin, that we may be partakers of his torments. His hatred is irre-

concileable, his strength great, his snares infinite, his batteries continual: he knows our weak side, and bribes our senses to betray our hearts. Therefore St. Paul's advice is necessary; *Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day*; that you may come off with victory, when he attacks you.

He sets forth also what is this armour of God: *above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* The temptations to impurity are the most frequent, as well as the most dangerous: and the apostle tells us, faith is the best defence against them. And did we but reflect on the eternal rewards God promises chastity, and the torments he threatens impurity; these thoughts would *quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* They would keep us from a falling, waited on by a short pleasure, and followed by a long remorse here, and an eternal punishment hereafter.

But alas! our faith sleeps; we only consult sense, and present satisfaction, and never reflect at how great a price we purchase it, *viz.* the loss of our souls: and for this reason, the vice is become epidemical; no age, no condition, no station, is free from this disorder. Against other precepts the transgression may be venial; but in matter of impurity, all with deliberate consent is mortal, all damnable. It not only depraves the will, but blinds the understanding, and renders a man insensible to any thing, that is generous, or Christian. He exposes his reputation, prostitutes his honour, betrays his friends, ruins his estate, to satisfy this ungovernable passion. It is not atheism, that leads to this sin, but this sin leads to atheism and heresy: no body doubts, says St. Austin, whether there be a God, but those for whom it would be expedient there were none. All heresies owe
their

their beginning or progress to this vice ; it corrupted mens hearts, before error seized on their judgments, and the desire of liberty, not of truth, made so many proselytes.

Few repent seriously of this sin ; their frequent resolutions to leave it, and their constant relapses into it, are a demonstration, it turns into nature, it stupifies and enchants, and leaves just reason enough to damn us. Oh ! who will not abhor a sin, so black in itself, so fatal in its effects ? What watchfulness is not necessary against an enemy, so insinuating on the one side, so dangerous on the other ? What guard ought we not to put upon our senses ? Through these the poison enters, to seize on the heart, and then the infection murders our soul.

If you desire, dear Christians, to preserve purity, fly all occasions that may tarnish it ; avoid romances, stories of gallantry, and indecent pictures : let them be of never so great value, your soul is more precious : cast them into the fire ; it is better for you to burn them, than for them to burn you : shun light dress, fitter for the votaries of Venus, than of Jesus Christ. Fly frequent visits, especially private with different sex ; where it shines, fire will follow, and when passion rises, chastity is in danger.

O God of purity ! and just revenger of sin ! give me such a horror of this vice, that I may rather suffer all things, than its tyranny. I tremble at my weakness, but thy assistance encourages me ; and continually standing on my guard, I hope thy hand will withdraw me from the precipice. How many millions has this impure fire burnt here, who burn now, and will eternally, in flames of brimstone and sulphur ? Some are lost for injustice, some for detraction ; but this unfortunate sin makes a part of almost every man's

condemnation. O Lord, remove from me intemperance, and suffer not the sin of impurity to infect me.

GOSPEL of St. Matth. Chap. xviii. Verse

23. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants.*

24. *And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which ought him ten thousand talents.*

25. *But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.*

26. *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

27. *Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*

28. *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which ought him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*

29. *And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

30. *And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*

31. *So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.*

32. *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:*

33. *Shouldst*

33. *Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*

34. *And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS passage of St. Matthew shews the infinite mercy of God, who is always ready to pardon our offences, on condition we pardon those our brethren commit against us: without this, no pardon for us, no mercy: it is a command, repeated in almost every chapter of the gospel, to make impression upon us; and our salvation depends upon our compliance. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* That is, we shall be cast into prison with the hard-hearted servant, from which there is no release.

The precept is indeed hard to nature, but easy to grace: the Jewish law went no farther than *love your friends*; but Christ has extended it to our enemies; *but I say unto you, love your enemies*; this precept is divine, as well as our religion, and both come immediately from God, and he has imposed the precept, not only for our perfection, but even for our safeguard, and the preservation of justice. What is more against the law of equity, than for a particular to mount the tribunal, and sit judge in his own cause? Self-love and interest blind the most upright judgment, and pronounce in their own favour. You are offended; you will revenge the injury: who gives you this sovereign authority?

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Both the law of God and man are against the usurpation: passion swells the injury beyond all measure, and you resolve on a revenge, not proportionable to the affront, but to the idea, by which passion represents it: what more unchristian? What more unjust, than to repair an injury by committing a greater?

But, besides, we are all God's enemies by our frequent offences, and we must obtain his pardon, or suffer for our enmity: he invites us to a reconciliation; he offers mercy, and exacts only this condition, if *we pardon our enemies*: is it not our interest to accept of the offer? He remits us a debt of *ten thousand talents*, and we one of no consideration: He will cast us into an eternal prison, if we refuse, and receive us into heaven, if we obey: can we doubt one moment what choice to make?

O God! How often hast thou forgiven me, for an humble asking of pardon? Is it not just and reasonable I should have the same goodness for my brother? What have I gained by my obstinacy against my brother, but to multiply my offences against thee? but to stop thy compassion towards me, to irritate thy justice, and work out my own damnation? Whatever has been committed against me, I forgive from the bottom of my heart; and desire no pardon of thee, if my resolution be not sincere.

To excuse our revenge, we pretend, O Lord, thy command is hard: but O! is it not ten times harder to satisfy this restless passion? Whilst we lay the intrigue; whilst we take our measures to compleat our revenge; how many vipers gnaw our vitals? How many troubles prey upon our hearts? How many fears, how many chagrins? We carry a hell within us, and first take vengeance on ourselves, before we assail our enemy: his
prosperity

prosperity alarms us, his success torments us : if he be powerful, we fear : in a word, we are continually on the rack, and lie under the fits of cold and heat, as well as the damned.

If we compleat our design, what a deluge of misery follows a short pleasure ? We have created new enemies, irritated a family, perchance as ready to revenge a relation's injury, as we were to revenge our own. Hence we must stand on our guard : we suspect every one ; tremble at shadows ; and render enmities immortal : one generous act of pardon had freed you from these sad consequences ; nay, had overwhelmed you with consolation ; for joy is as inseparable from virtue, as remorse from vice.

But you are a man of birth, and honour requires a just revenge : but are you not a Christian ? Has Christ made, in the gospel, any difference between gentlemen and peasants ? Is it not an honour to be a Christian ? How then can it be esteemed an infamy to comply with the duties of Christianity ?

O my Saviour ! do we, deluded creatures, know better than thee, in what honour consists ? Thou wert of the race of kings according to thy human nature, and the only Son of the Father, according to thy divine : thou didst never deserve ill treatment, either by word or action : yet to what height did the rage of thy enemies swell, to what cruelty, to what inhumanity ? Their behaviour was barbarous, thy patience divine ; notwithstanding thou didst not judge it a disgrace to pardon them. Nay, thou didst spill thy blood for their sakes, as well as by their hands ; and shall we, poor worms ! who adore thy majesty, blush to follow thy example ?

What can Christians say, but that I live up to the principles of thy religion ? But that I am

thy disciple? But that I take those measures thou hast prescribed to obtain pardon for my offences? That I live not by the corrupt maxims of the world, but by the principles of thy gospel? That I imitate thy saints, and follow their footsteps; whose practice of this heroick virtue, was the first step to their sanctity, and will be, to the world's end, a just subject of their panegyrick?

EPISTLE to the Philippians, Chap. i. Verse

2. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,*

4. *(Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy)*

5. *For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.*

6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

7. *Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, in as much as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*

8. *For God is my record how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*

9. *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment;*

10. *That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ.*

II. *Being*

II. *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

ST. Paul in this epistle shews an extreme tenderness for his dear Philippians, and wishes them grace and peace of mind, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. These two gifts can only come from God, and they are of such a nature, that the one cannot subsist without the other. Can a Christian enjoy peace of mind, who has the Omnipotent for his enemy? And what reason has he to fear, who is grateful to God, and lives under his protection?

In vain we labour to find peace of mind in pleasures, wealth, and honours; it is an unknown treasure to those we call happy, in the language of the world, and only dwells in a good conscience: sweat, and toil, to find it in the world; give liberty to all your passions; compass all your designs; you will experience what Solomon proclaim'd, *vanity of vanities*, all is vanity and vexation of spirit: say, you are content, without trouble, without desires; that your heart is calm; I will not believe you: these are only the effects of innocence, and of an entire submission to the will of God. No, no, my God, sanctity alone has the secret to convey peace into the soul, to calm the storms our passions raise, and to render us content.

How many are there in all states, who hide a tortured heart under a smooth brow, and a glittering exterior? who carry content in their Face, and Rage in their Heart? But where will you find a saint, that feels not true content? Joy sits on his face; satisfaction fills his heart; prosperity does not move him; adversity does not deject him; he
is

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is the same in all changes; unmoveable, unalterable; his peace is above the reach of those accidents, that put worldlings on the torture.

O my God! what fools are we to tire ourselves in the pursuit of content, where we are sure never to find it? Can we gather roses from thorns? or master our passions by irritating them? Peace and content are only the fruits of a good conscience, and this can only be purchased by virtue. If I give myself wholly to thee, what can I desire more in this world, or what can I fear? And can I be more happy, than to desire nothing, than to fear nothing?

I give you my peace, says our blessed Saviour, but not such a *peace, as the world gives*: there is no peace but in a good conscience; if this rises up against us, ten thousand worlds are unable to quiet it; pleasure, business and grandeur may cast it for a time into a lethargy, but it will soon awake to torment us; there is no peace for the wicked; they may laugh and sport, but this is only content in appearance; anguish and trouble prey on the heart, tho' mirth sits on the face: but thy peace, O Saviour, is a continual banquet; a pleasure they only can express, that feel it.

The Philippians received the gospel with cheerfulness, and continued steady in the profession; the imprisonment of the apostle did not weaken their faith, but redoubled their fervour, and this endeared them to him, and gave him reason to think, that God, who by his grace had made them Christians, would continue his favours, and make them saints. *Being confident of this very thing, that he, who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

It is true, a good beginning is not always crowned with a happy end: how many have relaps'd? how many have practised the greatest virtues, and returned

returned to the worst of vices, and not only forsaken the morals of Christianity, but apostatised from the very religion? So that there is no security that we shall persevere, whilst we breathe the corrupt air of this world.

If we begin betimes to serve God with fervour, we may hope, with confidence, *God will perfect the good work in us until the day of Jesus Christ*, and favour us with the grace of perseverance: for an early virtue has this happy advantage, that it finds us disengaged from ill habits, and consequently may be planted, and increase, without great opposition. Our passions are young, and may be easily tamed, and brought into subjection: besides, our fidelity to the first graces moves God to a greater liberality; and if we continue in this happy course, virtue passes into a habit, and then we may reasonably conclude *God will perfect it in us until the day of Jesus Christ*.

But if we pass our youth in disorders, without any practice or sense of religion, if we live not like Christians, can we expect with any reason to die saints? How many, my God, would enter into thy secrets, and know their destiny? Let us consult our lives, our actions, our thoughts: all our conduct furnishes us motives to satisfy our curiosity. Christ has told us, he will come in glory, to render to every one according to his works; they therefore, that do evil, have all reason to fear punishment; those, that do good, to expect a reward. Oh! what have I not reason to fear, who have squared my life by the wild maxims of the world? But, O God, by a victorious grace, and an extraordinary mercy, render false this sad presage of my unfortunate destiny; favour me with this grace, I conjure thy goodness; I promise for the future a life wholly Christian, a prognostick of my perseverance,

For

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For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. St. Paul gives us here a rule, how to love creatures; *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*: We must love them in God, and for his sake; all other motives are unacceptable to him, and below the duty of a Christian. God commands parents to love their children; but if this love, this tenderness, rises no higher than to a natural instinct, they fulfil not the law, and will receive no reward in heaven: it is a mere natural act; the Master of nature has imprinted this inclination in the most cruel beasts; a Christian must love them in the *bowels of Jesus Christ*; for his sake, because he has imposed the command.

This love must be subordinate to that we owe God; that is, we must never transgress his precepts, to raise a child's fortune, nor even to save his life: God never commanded parents to love their children at the expence of their own souls, and of his honour; nay, he says expressly, *he who loveth father or mother more than me*, I may add, *or child*, is not worthy of me.

No, no, my God! I have loved children and relations hitherto like a Pagan, not like a Christian; and what have I gained, but a small satisfaction here, without any hope of a reward hereafter? I will for the future raise my thoughts higher, and love every one only in thee, and for thee.

GOSPEL

GOSPEL of St. Matth. Chap. xxii. Verse

15. *Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.*

16. *And they sent out unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man : for thou regardest not the person of men.*

17. *Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou ? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not ?*

18. *But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites ?*

19. *Shew me the tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny.*

20. *And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription ?*

21. *They say unto him, Cesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar, the things which are Cesar's ; and unto God, the things that are God's.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour, from the beginning of this chapter, explained to the Pharisees the great mysteries of his religion, with a zeal and charity able to move the most obdurate. But what fruit did they reap from his divine instructions ? They entered into a conspiracy against him, not only to entrap him in his words, but, if possible, to accuse him of treason. O ! how often do Christians play the Pharisee ? How often, my God, do they leave the church, where they have heard explained the most important truths of the gospel, to satisfy a passion, to form or execute a criminal project ? This is to conspire against thee, my Saviour, to vilify

vilify thy person, to trample on thy sacred blood, and once more, in thy apostle's language, to nail thee to a cross : and this thou dost suffer, not from thy enemies the Pharisees, who denied thy Divinity, but from thy friends ; from those, who are honoured with thy Name, and adore thy Majesty.

The Pharisees send their disciples, together with some of the court ; they cover their malice under the mask of piety, and pretend to learn of him, not to entrap him. They begin their address with the praise of his Person : *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man ; for thou regardest not the person of men.* Who would not take these hypocrites for saints, these traytors for Christ's disciples ? Yet all these praises were only to gain his confidence, to draw from him some questionable expression, and in the end to ruin him.

Our blessed Saviour, who knew the malice of each sin, seems to caution us against no one so much as hypocrisy ; he declaims against it in almost twenty places, with zeal and execration. *Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ;* says he (Mat. xxiii. 27.) *ye are like whited sepulchers ;* fair without, but foul within : nothing more composed, more devout, than your exterior ; nothing more wicked, more criminal, than your hearts. The horror our blessed Saviour expresses of this sin shews its enormity ; and its effects, its malice.

Under the cover of hypocrisy all vices thrive, and well-meaning people are easily imposed upon. Oh ! how hard is it to defend ourselves against an enemy unsuspected ? Pride begins heresies, but hypocrisy gives them vogue, and spreads them. Arius, by his devout exterior, by his humble deportment, drew after him all the devotees of Alexandria, and his letters, full of piety, the bishops of the east : in a word, every heresy took the specious pretext of reform,

form, and spread its infection, by crying out against abuses ; by covering its vices under the veil of zeal, piety, mortification, and humility.

O my God ! how often have I been guilty of this criminal dissimulation ? How often have I play'd the hypocrite, and deceived, not only my neighbour, but myself also ? I have studied more to regulate my exterior, than my heart ; to edify men, than to please thee. Pardon all these defects of candor and sincerity : Father of mercy ! you see the heart of man ; I hope, by the assistance of thy grace, thou wilt not see in mine hypocrisy or dissimulation.

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou ? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not ? Their praise of his doctrine, of his piety, of his sincerity, only aimed at a direct answer to this captious question : had he said it was unlawful, they would have accused him of treason against the emperor : had he pronounc'd it lawful, he had drawn upon himself the hatred of the Jews, who look'd upon themselves as a privileged people, and the Roman tribute as an usurpation. Our Saviour first shewed, he read their malice, tho' covered under a disguise of piety, and that they desired not instruction, but his ruin. *Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites ?* He knew whether tribute was lawful, or no ; but he would not return a direct answer, because he would neither exasperate the Jews, nor shock the Romans.

And he would besides teach us, that our zeal must be neither imprudent, nor indiscreet : that we must take care not to draw upon ourselves persecution without necessity, nor by indiscretion hinder the good we may do by observing the rules of prudence : that we must not expose our neighbour, nor ourselves, to temptations : that we must suffer disgrace and persecution with patience, when we are unjustly

unjustly attack'd, but that we must never seek, nor provoke them. In fine, we may sometimes conceal the truth; but when we are obliged to speak it, we must deliver ourselves in the most civil and least offensive terms. An untimely and an indiscreet zeal is dangerous; it rather frights people from virtue, than draws them to it. Sweetness prevails more upon a sinner than severity; this shews anger, that compassion; and few are so obdurate in vice, as not to pity their own state, when others deplore it.

Altho' our Lord answered not directly to the captious question, he instructed them sufficiently by this admirable rule: *Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's; and to God, the things that are God's.* Princes have their rights, and God has his, which are unalterable; all the perfection of a Christian consists in the discharge of these two duties: we must pay our prince submission and fidelity. And as we owe God all we have, so we must render him all; every thought, every action belongs to him, and we invade his right, if we make them over to any creature.

But, O God! how few disobey the laws of princes, and how many transgress thine? What can we fear for our infidelity to them, but a prison, or death? Or what can we expect for our obedience, but an imaginary fortune, which may soon fall, and bury us under its ruins. But from thee, my God, we have received all we have, and may hope for a happiness that will never end: we may fear for our disobedience an everlasting death, an endless prison, *Where there is no order, and where the light is as darkness,* Job x. 22.

O the blindness! O the stupidity of man! the apprehension of a temporal calamity frights him to his duty, and the bare hope of a fading and inconstant fortune perswades him to it. But tho' thou,
my

my God, dost promise heaven for his obedience, and threaten hell for his infidelity, he sits unconcerned, as if he neither feared thy menaces, nor believed thy promise real. Oh! let me never fall into so deplorable an insensibility; let me not misplace so foolishly my hope and my fear; let me always fear thy justice, and hope in thy mercy.

EPISTLE to the Philippians, Chap. iii. Ver.

17. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.*

18. *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

19. *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)*

20. *For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

21. *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE apostle conjures the Philippians to practise all Christian virtues, and proposes as a rule, not only the example of their devout neighbours, but also his own: *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.* What is this ensample, but what he has left us in this epistle?

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whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. He has made us for himself, and he could not create us but for himself, and consequently all our thoughts, all our actions, belong to him: he has favoured us with an understanding to know him, with a will to love him; and we commit a theft, an high injustice, if we give our heart to any creature, or employ one moment in any thing but his service. Altho' the title of Creator gives him an indispensable right to all our actions, yet he demands not our service *gratis*: he promises us heaven, and will reward even the charity of a cup of water, given in his name. Yet all this goodness, all this liberality, cannot excite our fervour, awake our diligence, nor persuade us to serve him with fidelity. With what zeal do we serve a friend, a master, a relation? Every one endeavours to discharge his office, with honour and reputation: but, my God, who serves thee with the same punctuality, the same assiduity, the same fervour, we all serve the world? To serve thee, is to keep thy commandments; to serve with fervour, is not only to detest venial sin, but also to employ every moment in the exercise of virtue: how small is the number of these happy and faithful souls? It is true, there are some, who serve thee with fidelity in Babylon, as well as in Jerusalem; but they are rare, and scarce discernible. The crowd runs the other way, and one would think, my God, by their conduct, they suppose thou hast no eyes to see their infidelities, or no power to punish them.

I confess, my God, I am of the number of these unfaithful and unfortunate servants; every day, every moment should have been employed totally in thy service, and perchance I have not employed one; all my actions, due only to thee, have been thrown away on ease, sensuality, diversions, always vain, and often criminal.

Alas!

Alas! I am, perchance, almost at the end of my career, without the consolation of having served thee with fidelity one day; let at least the future be wholly dedicated to thy service; thy grace can supply my weakness, and make me steadfast to my resolution.

As, at the beginning of christianity, many lived up to the sanctity of their calling, so more profaned the best of religions with the worst vices. *For many walk, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even weeping, whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* The apostle deplores with tears the blindness of those wretched christians, and dissuades the *Philippians* from following their example: The world is corrupt in practice, and principles: we live in the midst of infection, and therefore we must guard ourselves with all the care imaginable against it. How many lead the same lives these loose *Philippians* did, who refer all their actions to the satisfaction of sense, and so turn sensuality into a Deity? Deluded creatures! They sing and dance, like those of whom *Job* speaks, and in a moment their mirth ends to give place to everlasting weeping, and gnashing of teeth; *whose end is destruction*

Indeed, were we to die like beasts, we might imitate their lives, and place our happiness in the gratifying our senses: But, alas! we only die to live eternally, either in felicity or misery, and our destiny in the other world depends on the lives we lead in this; virtue will find a reward, and vice a most severe punishment. Enter then, dear christians, into yourselves, and before you abandon yourselves to the inclinations of flesh and blood, weigh the pleasure you expect, with the pain you may justly fear; what proportion between the

laughing for a moment, and the weeping for all eternity?

But it is strange, not only to see christians sin without remorse, but also to *glory in their shame*; that is, to do ill, and then to do worse by boasting of their disorders. This is to insult God, and directly to fly in the face of the Omnipotent; it is to provoke his vengeance, and in effect to dare him to damn us. Is it possible, my God, that depravation of manners can carry impiety so far, as quite to bereave us of shame, that naturally waits on sin? But Oh! what crime is not an inveterate sinner capable of? When the heart is hardened, and conscience cast into a dead sleep, we stick at nothing, we lay down shame, and glory in our infamy.

O dear Jesus! defend me from sin; but if I am so unfortunate as to fall from thy grace, cover me with confusion, and never suffer me to forfeit shame with my innocence, much less to boast of my offences; this is the surest mark of thy anger, and most certain sign of my reprobation; it includes almost a firm resolution, never to return to thee, my God, but to remain obstinate, like the reprobate, and devils: inadvertency may excuse some failings, and passion lessen others; but in cold blood, in the face of the world, with a full reflection, to glory in our offences, is to defy thy justice, and contemn thy mercy, the only refuge of sinners: Let us not walk in the way of these miserable wretches, which leads to damnation.

But let *our conversation be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*. We were not created for this world, but for heaven; and therefore we must raise all our thoughts to that happy region of the blessed: This world is but a passage to our heavenly *Canaan*; to the land of promise, which Christ has purchased for us, at
the

the price of his most sacred blood. Every act of virtue forwards us in our journey, and perseverance puts us in possession of our inheritance: Our souls will mount thither at our death, and our bodies at the general resurrection; *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*; who will descend in glory, to invest our bodies, turned into dust and ashes, with immortality; they will be then more glorious than the sun, no more subject to corruption, but full of vigour, and shining in glory.

O happy state! It is in our power, O God, with the help of thy grace, one day to be placed in this happy region, and to enjoy thee there: Thou dost require nothing but to love thee here; who can refuse so easy a condition? Thy own perfections deserve love, and thy goodness, thy bounty to me, demands it.

GOSPEL of St. Matthew, Chap. ix. Verse

18. *While he spake these things unto them, behold there came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.*

19. *And Jesus arose, and followed him: and so did his disciples.*

20. *(And behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment.*

21. *For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.*

22. *But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour)*

23. *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,*

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24. *He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.*

25. *But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.*

26. *And the fame thereof went abroad into all that land.*

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

THE chief of the synagogue approach'd our Saviour and adored him, saying; *Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.* He approaches with reverence, he adores him with respect, he presents his request, and implores his assistance, and our Saviour grants his desire: There are requisites for a profitable prayer, necessary conditions to draw down favours upon us: in prayer we treat with God, the dreadful and infinite Majesty, Creator of heaven and earth, in whose presence the pillars of heaven and earth tremble: with what modesty, circumspection, and reverence, ought we to appear before this awful Being? With what respect ought we to present him our requests?

In the presence of a prince, we regulate every gesture, and if we pretend to a favour, we pen our petition in the most strong and respectful terms, thought and study are able to suggest. Yet, what is he, but a man of the same make with us? His station is different, but his nature the same with that of his lowest subject; and what do we expect? At most, some place, some employment, that has nothing valuable, but a vain appearance: they indeed render us great in the eyes of the world, but are unable to make us good.

Let us therefore enter into the presence of God, with the same respect; let us begin, continue, and
end

end our prayer in this disposition ; it will fix our attention, and hinder our thoughts from settling on other objects ; it will keep us in God's presence, and move him to continue in ours, and to communicate his favours with more liberality. Before prayer, raise your thoughts to God, and take some moments for recollection ; propose your request with humility, but yet with confidence : both are necessary ; tell almighty God your infidelities, that you deserve no favours, but his goodness animates you to hope for the greatest. Pray with attention, and fancy not devotion consists in running over many prayers ; a few suffice, if they are said well.

O God ! how often have I complained, thou wert deaf to my prayers, without considering, my carelessness and insensibility rather deserved punishment than a favour : I scarce knew where I was, much less what I demanded : Whilst I spoke to thee, my thoughts settled on other objects, always vain, and I fear sometimes criminal. Oh ! let me know thy greatness, and my indigence ; that will awe me into respect, this will force me to importune thy goodness with fervour and confidence.

Whilst our Saviour went with the chief of the synagogue to work one miracle, on his way he wrought another. *And behold a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment.* Christ rewarded her faith and humility with a perfect cure ; and the woman became whole from that hour.

This distressed woman is a lively picture of an inveterate sinner, and her conduct teaches us by what steps we must recover that grace, we have lost by our offences. She had recourse to doctors, according to St. Mark, chap. v. and *had spent all that she had* : but their remedies only served to increase her sufferings, and the disease ; and when

she had spent all her means, she found the expence unprofitable, and her evil incurable.

In vain does a sinner hope to quiet his conscience, by human means, or to obtain pardon. God alone can call us to repentance, the sole balsam of a wounded conscience ; and to obtain it, we must imitate this poor woman : She has an extreme confusion, she dares not present herself before our Saviour, she hides herself in the crowd to draw near unto him, and scarce has the boldness to touch his garment. Oh ! what a pattern is here of humility ! notwithstanding she is animated with a strong confidence, she shall obtain her desire, if she can but touch his garment. Confidence without humility is ineffectual, humility without confidence is vain ; but both together disarm God's justice, and turn it into mercy.

O God ! how many years has my soul been sick of a mortal disease, and how unadvisedly have I begged a cure of creatures ? How can I expect a remedy from those very objects, that have caused my misfortune, and cast me into this deplorable distemper ? Creatures may draw me into the precipice of sin, but thou alone canst disengage me. I blush at my infidelities, but confide in thy goodness : And altho' I scarce dare ask pardon, when I behold the greatness of my ingratitude, I firmly hope it when I consider thy mercy : Thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but his conversion ; not his damnation, but his repentance. I repent from the bottom of my heart ; I detest my former disorders ; I resolve, with thy grace, never to abandon thee, but rather to forfeit my life than thy favour.

Our Saviour followed the ruler of the synagogue, and when he was come into the house, *He said, Give place ; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.* They understood not our Saviour's meaning, and so turned his words
into

into sport and raillery. Good God! how many, even christians, make as bold with the maxims our Saviour has left us in the gospel? How exactly do they imitate these prophane maxims, and ridicule those virtues they will not practise? Humility, so much recommended by our Saviour, passes in the world for meanness of spirit; sincerity for simplicity; pardon of injuries for cowardice. Notwithstanding, the opinion of the world cannot repeal God's commands; and those, who laugh at his precepts, must either repent, or will hear the fatal *Depart*, and will be forced to weep eternally.

When the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. Have you a mind to be raised to a new life; retire from the world, from the noise and tumult of affairs, and enter into solitude. The impulse of grace is not perceived in a crowd and hurry; whilst your heart is filled with earthly concerns, there is no room for God.

O dear Saviour! what have we to do with this world, who were made for another? This is not our dwelling, but a passage. Why then so much care to lay up provision here, without concern for any hereafter? Why so much solicitude to put in order our estates, for fear of surprise, and so little to secure our souls?

Oh! how foolish are those we call wise! My concern is to procure heaven: This is my business, my only business; and this shall be my only care.

EPISTLE to the Colossians, Chap. i. Verse

9. *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding :*

10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and encreasing in the knowledge of God :*

11. *Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness :*

12. *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light :*

13. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son :*

14. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

The MORAL REFLECTION.

THIS great apostle did not only labour continually for the conversion of those Christ had committed to his charge, but prayed God with fervour to pour down his benediction on his endeavours, and on those blind infidels, whose salvation he so earnestly desired. All those who have care of souls should follow this model: it is their duty not only to instruct their flock, in all points that concern salvation; but they must also beseech and importune God to supply them with his grace, that those, who have stray'd, may return from their errors; and those, who have not, may preserve their innocence to the end. This zeal, this seraphick charity of the apostle gave his labours so great success; converted

verted so many pagans, and of profligate sinners made them saints. The instructions of a pastor may teach us our duty ; but charitable prayers oftentimes procure us grace, to comply with it.

The apostle begged of God, that the Colossians might *walk worthy of him, unto all pleasing*. To walk worthy of God, we must refer all our thoughts and actions to his glory, and aim at the highest sanctity. Our Saviour sets us no other model of sanctity but God's : not that he pretends a creature can ever arrive to the infinite sanctity of his Creator ; but he shews us, that it is the duty of christians to aim at the highest virtues ; to co-operate, to the utmost of our power, with all the graces God is pleased to give us. *To walk worthy of God*, is, in the first place, to avoid all mortal sin. And, secondly, with reflection not to commit even venial. It is to practise a generous and constant mortification ; a punctuality in all the duties of our state. It is to declare a constant war against the passions, to make no peace with those rebels, till they are overcome : it is to reform our manners, to hate what Christ hated, to embrace what he esteemed : it is to turn all the occurrences of life to God's glory, and even necessity into virtue. This life is subject to a thousand changes ; we cannot be always in the same situation, but we may always *walk worthy of God* : that is, serve him in what state, or condition soever we are. Adversity follows prosperity ; sickness, health ; joy ends in affliction. If we cannot change this vicissitude, we may receive it with submission, and render ourselves happy, by making all accidents subservient to virtue, and God's honour.

Ah my God ! have I walk'd worthy of thee one day, or even one hour ? How many years of my fleeting life are past ? I attend on the brink of my grave ; what provision have I made for eternity ?

Have

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Have I walk'd like a disciple of Jesus Christ, or of the world? After so many inspirations, so many serious reflections, so many resolutions, am I become more humble? more charitable? more exact? more regular? more mortified? more religious? more christian? How often have I flattered myself, that I walk'd worthy of thee; because I exercised some passing works of piety; because I sometimes frequented the church, and approach'd thy holy table? Tho' at the same time, wholly bent on the vanities of this world, I rather eat to my damnation, than to my salvation.

Disengage me, my God, from all those vain amusements, that have hitherto taken up my thoughts and my time; that have rendered thy grace ineffectual, and my negligence inexcusable. I see my fault and deplore it; let me never more fall into my former indolence; but touch my heart so powerfully with thy grace, that it may break through all opposition, and walk in the perfect observance of thy commandments, to enter into the happy enjoyment of thy glory.

Strengthen'd with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering, with joyfulness. The apostle teaches, what he had received of his Master, that those who live piously, shall suffer persecution, shall never fail to find enemies; and consequently, they must arm themselves with patience, to suffer with sweetness towards those who persecute them; with joy, because God polishes their virtue; with hope, that he will crown their sufferings with an eternal repose, and an incomprehensible glory.

Suffering is the lot of saints, and a favour to sinners: it perfects those, and calls these to repentance. All the saints have been tried in the furnace of tribulation, and our Saviour would not be exempted; he drank of the bitter cup before he presented

presented it to his followers; and took off the bitterness by his passion: by torments he entered into his glory, and all the elect must enter heaven the same way. But, O God! what proportion between a moment's pain, and an eternal reward? Thy bounty is above expression: thy liberality surpasses our labours: a short patience receives a long felicity, everlasting in duration, unalterable; neither subject to time, nor accidents.

Spare me not, my God, in this life; only be merciful to me in the other: Fortify me with thy grace, that I may not sink under adversity; but that I may bear it not only with submission, but even with cheerfulness.

GOSPEL of St. Matth. Chap. xxiv. Verse

15. *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)*

16. *Then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains.*

17. *Let him which is on the house-top, not come down to take any thing out of his house:*

18. *Neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes.*

19. *And wo unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.*

20. *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day:*

21. *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

22. *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

23. *Then*

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23. *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not.*

24. *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect.*

25. *Behold, I have told you before.*

26. *Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth : behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not.*

27. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

28. *For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

29. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkned, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.*

30. *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.*

31. *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

32. *Now learn a parable of the fig-tree : When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.*

33. *So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things; know that it is near, even at the doors.*

34. *Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

35. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

The

THE MORAL REFLECTION.

OUR blessed Saviour foretells to his apostles the destruction of the temple, which happened forty years after his ascension, under Titus Vespasian, and the ruin of Jerusalem, together with that of the synagogue and the people. This sad disaster was the just punishment of their sins, and principally for the murder of the Messias, so long expected, and so barbarously put to death, by the contrivance of the priests, and consent of the whole nation. God gave them forty years, to enter into themselves; he expected their repentance with patience: but their obstinacy was proof against all his goodness, and so drew down upon them divine vengeance, the greater, because long deferred.

O my God! how long have you expected my return to your grace, which I have forfeited by my sins? How long have I refused your pressing invitations to repentance? Your frequent calls to lead a life worthy of the religion, your only Son brought from heaven, and I have the happiness to profess? Yet, like the hard-hearted Jews, I have persisted in my obstinacy; and, as much as I am able, have, not once, but often, crucified my Saviour by my disorders, *Heb. vi. 6*. Nay, I am more guilty than they; for your apostle confesses, had they known he was God, they would not have crucified him; so that ignorance might plead in some measure their excuse: but alas! I have not this pretext: I know he is my God, my Saviour, and have contemned the very Majesty I adore; and consequently deserve no more mercy than that unfortunate people, which wanders about the world like accursed Cain, as a perpetual monument of your justice. But, my God, your grace has mol-

lified

lified my stubborn heart; my past life confounds me, and your patience raises my confidence, that you will seal my pardon: I cast myself at your feet with bended knees, a contrite heart, and a firm resolution rather to die, than to live in your disfavour.

The apostles were curious to know the time, when the temple was to be destroyed, and the world to end; *tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming*: but our Saviour thought not fit to satisfy their curiosity: the end of the world, and the day of judgment, are secrets God has reserved to himself; yet we know the world will soon end to us, and that the sentence of our eternal destiny will be pronounced at farthest within some years, and perchance within some days, and even moments: this ought to be the subject of our daily meditations, of all our thoughts: we cannot be too careful to provide against a moment, unknown to us, yet on which our *all* depends.

Our Saviour bids us stand on our guard, to avoid surprize. O my Saviour: I will follow thy advice, and resolve to live in the state I desire to die: death steals upon me unforeseen; and because I am ignorant when it will come, by the assistance of thy grace, I will always be prepared to receive it.

Tho' our Saviour concealed the time of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, he gave them a sign that should precede it; *when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand.)* This prophannation happened in the time of the siege, when a troop of assassins seized on the temple, and committed, in that holy place, a thousand murders and sacrileges. There is no greater sign of God's anger against a man or nation,

tion, and of a sudden vengeance, than when he permits sacrilege and prophanation of holy things. It is true, my God, I have not prophaned thy church by murders, as the unfortunate Jews did thy temple; but how often have I approach'd to thy holy table with a rankled heart, and received thy body and blood into a breast polluted with crimes, with enmities, and hatred; and thus turned the food of life, the source of grace, into poison and sacrilege? Pardon, I beseech thy mercy, my impiety; revenge thy honour, and my crimes, on my body, my estate; only spare my soul, redeemed by thy sacred blood.

Our Saviour, by several expressions, marks the miseries the Jews underwent at the destruction of their city, and those the church will undergo in the reign of Antichrist. *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world.* Perchance these miseries touch us not, because some are past, and others at a great distance. But at least God, who is terrible in his anger, and severe in his justice, is always present; and therefore fear to offend him, and endeavour to procure pardon by a sincere repentance: remember, if he be merciful, he is also just; and if his mercy raises your hope, let his justice awake your fear.

There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders. To try his elect, God has permitted false prophets in all ages to rise, and here he cautions us against them; *Believe them not.*

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the Sun shall be darkned, and the moon shall not give her light. Before our Saviour's second coming, the end of one misery shall be the beginning of another: wars and seditions will begin the tragedy; then plagues, earthquakes, and famine will follow;

the cruel persecution of Antichrist will succeed ; and lastly, a general conflagration will consume all things. O my God ! what condemnation will seize on men in those days ? What horror ? What confusion ? Who then shall we esteem happy ? Power and dignities will be no defence ; wealth of no use ; nothing will afford comfort or assurance, but a good conscience, but either innocence or repentance.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. The royal standard of the cross shall appear more bright than a thousand suns ; the cross that once was a scandal to the Jews, and a fable to the Gentiles, shall confound the pride of those, and the infidelity of these : it shall receive now a homage, not to the salvation of the wicked, but to their damnation : the infidel will confess, it should have been the object of his faith, the libertine, the rule of all his actions ; but alas ! this confession comes too late : the gate of mercy is shut ; nothing remains but tears and lamentations, the last refuge of the miserable. Let us weep now, whilst tears are profitable, whilst they disarm justice, and move God to mercy : defer them not, till the cross appears in heaven ; for they will only end in despair ; or rather they will always continue, as the marks of our past folly, and of our eternal reprobation.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. The angels will convey the saints to our Saviour's right hand, the devils will draw the wicked to his left ; those to receive the final sentence of their eternal happiness, these of their eternal misery. O my God ! what would a sinner give for the lowest place among thy elect ? He
forfeited

forfeited his ease and quiet in this world, and even his soul, to raise a fortune; and what has he gained, but the sad privilege to be the more tormented? Now those virtuous Christians, who were condemned for fools at the world's tribunal, are esteemed wise; and those sinners, who magnified their own wisdom, condemn their folly.

Let us spend some thoughts, dear Christians, on this dreadful day, and make some preparation for it; it is in our power at present to provide a place, either on Christ's left hand, or his right; and it is uncertain how long Providence will allow us this opportunity: it is the worst of follies, to dally when heaven and hell lie at stake, and a madness to learn the happiness of the saints by its loss, and the misery of the damned by experience.

O my God! let this last trumpet continually sound in my ears, *Arise ye dead, and come to judgment*: Let the prospect of this terrible judgment appear always before my eyes, and the two eternities be present to my thoughts: such a dismal scene, on the one side will, I hope, withdraw me from sin: such a charming, such a transporting object, on the other, will persuade me to practise those virtues, thou hast commanded in thy gospel, and taught me by thy example: what signifies the applause of men; if I am pronounc'd guilty at thy tribunal? or their reproach, if thou dost declare me innocent? By thy judgment I must stand, or fall: and thrice happy I, if I am of that blessed company, which thou dost invite to eternal joy. *Come ye blessed.*

F I N I S.



A

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